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# Implementation and Evaluation of the Jesus Loves Jeans Initiative to Evangelize and Retain Youth for the Houston International Seventh-day Adventist Church

Kendall Turcios

*Andrews University*

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ABSTRACT

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE *JESUS LOVES*  
*JEANS* INITIATIVE TO EVANGELIZE AND RETAIN  
YOUTH FOR THE HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Kendall Turcios

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ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF THE *JESUS LOVES JEANS* INITIATIVE TO EVANGELIZE AND RETAIN YOUTH FOR THE HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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Date Completed: September 2010

The Topic

The Houston International Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church has had significant challenges baptizing and retaining its youth. In the last five years, only a few youth have been baptized and nearly 50% no longer attend church. A primary contributing factor seems to be the lack of training to develop genuine biblical discipleship in the youth and young adults. Eims (1978) describes the process of discipleship as “[taking a] person from the time of his conversion and helping him become a solid, dedicated, committed, fruitful, mature disciple who could in time repeat that process in the life of another” (p. 18).

## The Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to assess the effectiveness of implementing the *Jesus Loves Jeans Youth Discipleship Initiative* by measuring the difference it makes in the evangelization and retention of youth for Houston International SDA Church. If one considers biblical discipleship to be the overarching principle and the broad opening of a funnel, the *Jesus Loves Jeans Initiative* is merely a first step and tool for youth and young adults to be activated in evangelism while increasing their commitment, maturity, and helping them become more fruitful and naturally retaining them. Because of the time limitations of this study it does not include a longitudinal analysis of the retention of these youth and young adults, but does provide some anecdotal references of the initiatives results in other places.

## The Sources

A survey of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White will contribute to a theological analysis of general as well as youth evangelism and retention principles. A study of selected current literature relevant to youth evangelism, and pertinent sociological and cultural concepts that relate to the effectiveness of the *Jesus Loves Jeans* initiative, will be conducted. The results of the initiative will be analyzed to glean insights about the effects on the church, its youth and young adults, and the overall impact on the Houston International SDA Church.

## Conclusions

Some of the current youth evangelism principles found to be successful in evangelization and retention of youth are core foundations of the *Jesus Loves Jeans* youth discipleship initiative. The biblical principles of discipleship and the unique mission of

the SDA Church are reflected in this initiative. This initiative proved successful in activating, and connecting, with the target audience of youth and young adults at the Houston International SDA Church. In addition, the conclusion of this dissertation contains various samples of the materials and information for implementing this initiative in other Adventist churches (see appendices B and C).

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Project Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by

Kendall Turcios

November 2010

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To my grandfather Pedro Celestino Roque (El Tigre) whose tireless spirit and unceasing dedication to the cause of God continues to inspire. You never got to see the impact your life and ministry has had on me.  
God is ever answering the prayer for the *double portion*.  
We yearn for resurrection morning like never before.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	x
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	xi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Justification for the Project .....	3
Definition of Terms.....	6
Description of Methodology .....	7
Limitations .....	8
II. Biblical Foundations and Reflections on Evangelizing and Retaining Young People .....	10
Introduction.....	10
Biblical Concepts of Evangelizing Youth.....	12
Evangelizing Youth in the Old Testament.....	13
Isaiah 52 .....	15
Israel’s Mission to the Gentiles .....	15
Israel is Chosen to Witness .....	16
Old Testament Centripetal Focus in God’s Missional Plan .....	17
Joshua Leads On Behalf of His Family .....	17
Evangelizing Youth in the New Testament .....	18
The Great Commission.....	18
Source of the Great Commission: God.....	19
Scope of the Great Commission: All the World.....	20
Message of the Great Commission: The Gospel .....	20
Method: Discipleship, Baptism, Teaching, and Calling.....	21
Evangelism in the Apostolic Church.....	21
Witnesses in Jerusalem and Beyond .....	22
Centrifugal Approach With Concentric Circles .....	22
The Role of the Holy Spirit in Evangelism .....	23
Evangelism in Pauline Epistles .....	23

Gospel Has Gone to the Whole World.....	24
The Gospel Must be Contextualized .....	24
Biblical Concepts of Youth Retention .....	25
The Concept of Permanence or Retention .....	25
Disciples Bear Fruit and Remain.....	26
God is Interested in Saving Everyone .....	27
The Family as a Means of Retaining Youth.....	28
Discipline.....	29
Worship as a Means of Retaining Youth.....	29
Involvement in Ministry as a Means of Retaining Youth .....	30
Discipleship: Committed and Connected .....	31
Evangelism and Retention in the Writings of Ellen White.....	32
Evangelism.....	32
Retention .....	35
Summary .....	37
III. Literature Review .....	39
Introduction.....	39
Concepts.....	41
Adolescence .....	41
Disaffiliation .....	42
Contemporary Discipleship .....	44
Change .....	46
Advances in Technology .....	48
Globalization .....	49
Post Modernism’s Impact .....	50
Absolute Truth.....	50
Successful Elements of Relating With Non-Believers.....	51
Organic Expressions.....	52
Contextualizing the Gospel.....	54
New Wineskins.....	55
Embedding in the Culture.....	56
Common Methodologies.....	57
Fortress Model.....	57
Salt of the Earth Model .....	59
Adventism’s Unique and Relevant Calling.....	60
Contemporary Voices in Adventism.....	61
Historical Journey of Adventism.....	62
A Meaningful Eschatology.....	63
Reviving the Remnant .....	64
Current Initiatives and Resources .....	66
Meeting Youth Where They Are .....	67
3Story Evangelism .....	67

Way of the Master .....	68
General Youth Conference .....	68
GODencounters .....	69
<i>Dare 2 Share</i> .....	70
<i>Sharing Jesus</i> .....	71
Conclusions.....	71
IV. The Jesus Loves Jeans Youth Discipleship Initiative .....	73
Introduction.....	73
Jesus Loves Jeans Initiative .....	74
History.....	74
JLJ Title in Spanish: <i>Jesús Ama Los Maones</i> Remix .....	76
The Four Foundations of Jesus Loves Jeans.....	77
Prayer.....	77
Friendship .....	78
Proclamation.....	79
Challenge.....	80
Youth Discipleship Cycle .....	81
Importance of Local Leadership.....	82
Jesus Loves Jeans Rally .....	83
Prayer.....	84
Praise and Worship.....	84
Drama and Creative Tools.....	84
Apologetics.....	85
Inspiration and Training .....	87
Conclusion and Invitation .....	88
The Jesus Loves Jeans Discipleship Resources .....	89
Devotional and Witnessing Book.....	89
Small Group Ice Breaker Cards.....	91
Bible Study DVD .....	92
Website, Hope Channel DVD Training, and AdventSource.org.....	94
Reaping Evangelistic Meetings.....	95
Format of Jesus Loves Jesus Evangelism Program.....	95
Summary .....	99
V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JESUS LOVES JEANS YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP INITIATIVE AT THE HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL SDA CHURCH.....	101
Profile of the Houston International SDA Church.....	101
Personal Ministerial History in Houston, Texas .....	101
Brief Denominational History of Texas and Houston .....	102
Demographic Study of Houston, Texas .....	102

History of the Houston International SDA Church.....	104
Current Profile of the Houston International SDA Church .....	104
Profile of the Youth and Young Adults of the Houston International SDA Church .....	105
Comparison and Contrast With Profile by the Center for Creative Ministry .....	106
Success Stories of the JLJ Initiative.....	107
Israel Garcia .....	107
Alvaro Montalvo .....	108
Dolores Agrinzonis.....	109
Implementation of the Jesus Loves Jeans Initiative.....	110
Preparatory Phase.....	110
Implementation Phase .....	111
Jesus Loves Jeans Rally .....	111
Evangelistic Small Groups .....	115
Evangelistic Meetings .....	116
Evaluation of the Initiative and Results .....	118
Summary .....	120
 VI. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, and CONCLUSION.....	 121
Summary .....	121
Recommendations.....	123
Some Things I Have Learned .....	123
Future Revisions and Modifications .....	125
Projected Ideas for Jesus Loves Jesus.....	126
Longitudinal Study and Innovative Methodologies.....	126
Conclusion .....	127
 Appendix	
 A. ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS FROM CHAPTERS 2 AND 3 .....	 128
Additional Analysis From Chapter 2 .....	128
Additional Analysis From Chapter 3 .....	133
 B. JESUS LOVES JEANS FORMS AND HANDOUTS .....	 138
Handout of Pray A P.R.A.I.S.E. ....	138
Committees and Responsibilities.....	139
Jesus Loves Jeans Program Schedule .....	144
Jesus Loves Jesus Registration Form.....	145
Rally Handout .....	146

C. JESUS LOVES JEANS RESOURCES .....	151
Jesus Loves Jeans Ice Breaker Cards .....	151
Jesus Loves Jeans Ice Breaker Questions .....	152
Jesus Loves Jeans Witnessing Book .....	160
Jesus Loves Jeans DVD—Lessons 1-15.....	179
REFERENCE LIST.....	232
VITA .....	240

## LIST OF FIGURES

1.	Age Profile of Demographic Survey for the SDA Church in North America Compared to the General U.S. Population .....	2
2.	Picture of Jesus Loves Jeans Resources: Witnessing Book, DVD, and Invitations .....	82
3.	Jesus Loves Jeans Devotional/Witnessing Book: Youth Discipleship .....	90
4.	Example From Chapter 1: “A Worn-Out Jean” .....	90
5.	Picture of Jesus Loves Jeans “Ice Breaker Cards” .....	92
6.	Picture of Jesus Loves Jesus “Bible study DVD” .....	94

## LIST OF TABLES

1.	Jesus Loves Jeans Bible Study DVD: Titles and Themes for Each Lesson .....	93
2.	Sample Program Schedule for the Jesus Loves Jesus Evangelistic Program.....	99



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GYC	General Youth Conference
HISDA	Houston International Seventh-day Adventist Church
JLJ	Jesus Loves Jeans
KJV	King James Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Pr.	Pastor
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
YFC	Youth for Christ

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Houston International Seventh-day Adventist Church (HISDA) has had significant challenges in baptizing and retaining its youth. In the last five years only a few youth have been baptized and a significant number no longer attend. Today young adults, those aged 19-34, represent only 5.8% of a congregation of 445 members. This disinterest reflects the trends reported by Monte Sahlin and Paul Richardson (2008) in their demographic survey of North America, which shows a significant underrepresentation of the millennial generation in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church (p. 5; see figure 1 below.) They describe the millennial generation as, “today’s teens and young adults, born from 1977 through 1994, [who were] 14 to 31 years of age in 2008” (p. 6). There is some variation of this demographic classification yet the growing trend toward an underrepresentation of young people above the age of 20 in the church is clear regardless of which classification is used.

Sahlin and Richardson’s (2008) research reveals the alarming trend in which fewer than half of those aged 20-34 are represented in the church compared to the same demographic range in the United States. Furthermore, youth and young adults are leaving the church. Roger Dudley (2000) confirmed this trend in his book, *Why Our Teenagers*

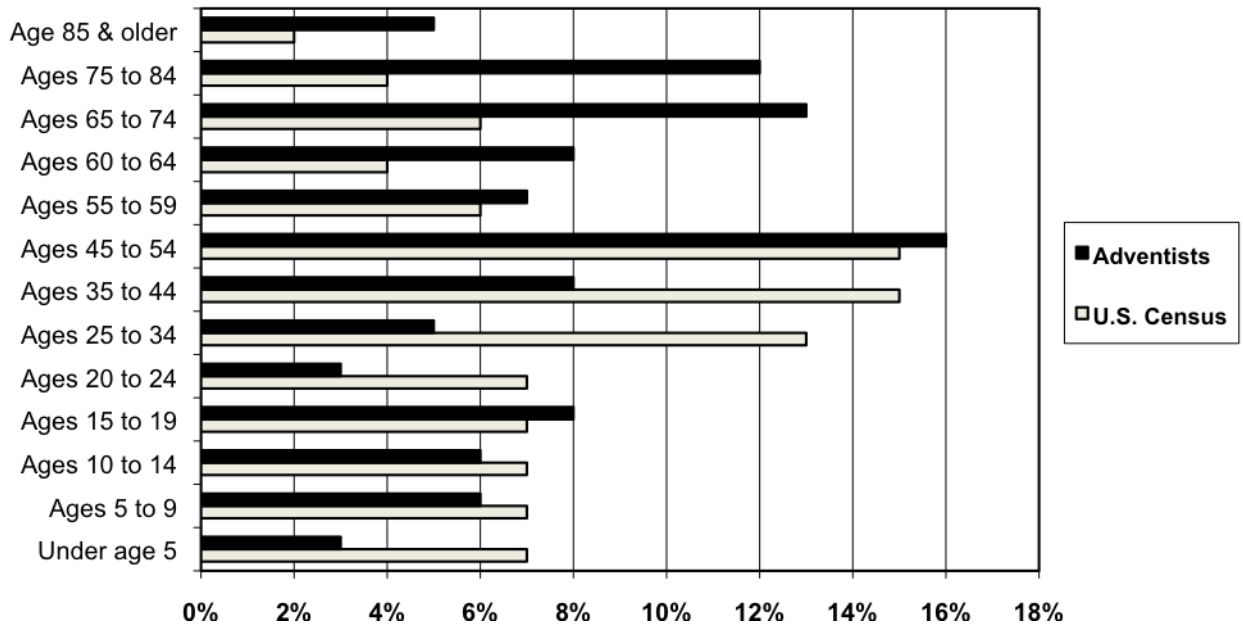


Figure 1. Age profile of demographic survey for the SDA Church in North America compared to the general U.S. population. Adopted from Sahlin and Richardson, 2008, *Seventh-day Adventists in North America: A Demographic Profile*, p. 5.

*Leave the Church.* He showed the number of young people dropping out of the church in the year 2000 increased by 50% over the prior 10 years (pp. 33-35). A primary contributing factor seems to be the lack of genuine biblical discipleship among the youth and young adults. Dudley (2000) shows evidence of this lack of biblical discipleship in describing an increasing disconnect of young people in their local churches, not existing in a meaningfully enfranchised way in their churches (p. 35). Genuine biblical discipleship is characterized by vibrant and growing faith expressed in quantitative as well as qualitative growth not loss. Eims (1978) has provided a good definition when he describes discipleship as the process of taking a “person from the time of his conversion and helping him become a solid, dedicated, committed, fruitful, mature disciple who could in time repeat that process in the life of another” (p. 18).

The youth evangelism initiative called Jesus Loves Jeans (JLJ) has been implemented in the Texas Conference as well as in other parts of the North American Division and has been successful in increasing the number of youth that grow spiritually, get involved in church and witnessing, and remain. From the year 2006 to 2008 over 270 youth and young adults were baptized in the Texas Conference as a direct result of JLJ (J. Murillo, personal communication, September 6, 2010). In the Southern California Conference since 2009, two training events have been held, 1,200 youth and young adults have been trained, 155 evangelistic Small Groups have been launched, and 200 have been baptized (C. Acosta, personal communication, September 6, 2010) and in the New Jersey Conference about 60 were baptized as a result of the initiative (L. Cortes, personal communication, September 6, 2010). The initiative has been implemented in Mexico, Panama, and Costa Rica with similar results. Significant to all of this is the number of youth and young adults who have been activated into evangelistic Small Groups with a vision to living out biblical discipleship principles.

The purpose of this project is to implement this youth evangelism initiative at the HISDA and evaluate its success in evangelizing youth.

### **Justification for the Project**

The biblical principle of discipleship portrays the Christian as one who has a dynamic and growing experience of following and obeying Christ as well as inviting others to also follow and obey Him (Eims, 1978, p. 18). Jesus' command is the impetus for discipleship:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I

have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.  
(Matt 28:19-20 NKJV)

Unfortunately, however, this principle describes an ever decreasing segment of SDA young people in the in the North American Division, a fact that helps to explain the hemorrhaging of our young people (Sahlin and Richardson, 2008; Dudley 2000). As pointed out in the figure above, the representation of 20-34 year olds in the church is nearly 60% less than the same demographic for the general population of United States.

Of the fresh approaches for helping youth in their spiritual journey that have emerged in recent years, some have been entertainment based, nurture oriented, apologetic, liturgical, servant, spiritual discipline, and service focused (Canales, 2006, p. 205). However, these *fresh approaches* have not produced the long-term results expected. Rahn and Linhart (2009) point out that the differences among them are theological and/or philosophical: “Some in our postmodern culture invite us to consider only the Jesus of our own experience . . . at the other extreme are those who can clinically dissect the historical record of Jesus’ life” (p. 20).

A more balanced and effective approach appears to be a holistic discipleship initiative as the most effective even though it is by far the most ambitious and difficult to implement. When Canales (2006) explored ecumenical models of youth ministry, he found,

Discipleship is an expansive area of inquiry. However, a holistic discipleship initiative is the most effective even though it is by far the most ambitious and difficult to implement. Therefore, one of the most pressing drawbacks of the ‘Christian discipleship’ model is that it is a broad spectrum from which to operate. (p. 229)

These challenges do not exist in a vacuum but rather in an ever changing landscape. In spite of the challenges, nothing less will suffice. It is precisely today’s ever changing

landscape that necessitates a comprehensive approach to meet the growing challenges to the church.

The challenges the church is facing today are unprecedented. The world is changing at a dizzying pace and leaders are hard pressed to keep up. Leonard Sweet (2008, p. 2) posits that the church has had to navigate culture storms in the past and today is no different, except that this “storm is taking Christianity where no Christian has gone before” (p. 2). Hipps (2009), a former advertising executive for Porsche, suggests that technology has actually altered the faith of the current culture. He rephrases Marshall McLuhan’s theory of communication, which states “the medium is the message” (p. 25), by saying that “you can’t change methods without changing your message—they’re inseparable” (p. 25). Today’s youth leaders can see why they face such a daunting task. It is no wonder that some have called for the next generation of youth leaders to be akin to “cultural anthropologists with relational passion” (Oestreicher, 2008, p. 72).

To find ways to reverse the trend, a study of the factors that help explain the loss of our youth needs to be made, and a promising holistic method that correlates the relationship of the youth to the church with their level of biblical discipleship tested. The study could also impact the youth and young adults who currently remain in the church but who struggle with the irrelevance of being primarily spectators rather than participants because they have not been taught, trained, and empowered in their role as Christ’s disciples. The belief that young people will continue attending a church service devoid of personal and relevant meaning or empowerment in the mission of the church is proving false.



The model known as the JIJ Initiative is designed to inspire, train, and equip youth and young adults with the biblical principles of discipleship. However, it has not been formally evaluated as a potential solution for reclaiming and retaining youth as well as activating them in the mission of the church. Previous experience with the initiative has suggested that when the youth discover the joy of discipleship and are given tools specifically designed to engage them in ways appropriate to today's culture, they begin to thrive, or as Sweet (2007) has said, "offer people a meaningful, earth-changing mission and then just *try* to hold them back!" (p. 15, emphasis original)

Because the church faces such challenges in connection with their youth and young adults, this dissertation aims to provide an evaluation of the promising JIJ Youth Discipleship Initiative intended to evangelize and retain youth. Few would argue the priority of such an initiative for the church today.

### **Definition of Terms**

Defining a few key terms will help to provide clarity in this study. For example, whenever the term JIJ is used in this dissertation, it specifically refers to the youth discipleship initiative created and first implemented by Pr. José A. Pagán, Pr. Josue Murillo and the researcher of this dissertation. The term is used to describe the concept and program as well as the implementation of the initiative. The phrase is a metaphor that refers to different styles of jeans (worn out, torn, designer, white, etc.) which are compared to powerful Gospel stories of grace and the way Jesus loves all youth and longs to change their lives forever.

Discipleship is defined in this dissertation by Eims (1978) as taking a “person from the time of his conversion and helping him become a solid, dedicated, committed, fruitful, mature disciple who could in time repeat that process in the life of another” (p. 18). This project emphasizes the discipleship aspect of repeating the process in another’s life.

For the purpose of this study youth and young adults are being defined as those who are between the ages of 12-34 years of age. Those who are aged 12-18 are classified as youth while those who are between the ages of 19-34 are classified as young adults. Because this terminology remains in flux within sociology itself, the parameters presented here fall somewhat in line with established norms. Other terms are defined in their dissertation context.

### **Description of Methodology**

The primary goal of this project was to explore the biblical basis of the JLJ Youth Discipleship Initiative, implement the initiative, and analyze its impact on the youth and young adults of the HISDA.

The process involved many different steps. The first step provided a rationale for the study and the reasons youth and young adults were losing interest in church. It explored theological and biblical foundations for the evangelization and retention of youth, followed by a review of the most current and relevant literature on the evangelization and retention of youth. Special attention was given to discovering relevant sociological and cultural elements that are impacting the current age, along with reviewing Adventist authors and their contribution towards the formation of a

contextualized view of youth evangelism with the mission of the Adventist Church in mind. Next, the JLJ Initiative is described and its main elements discussed. Lastly, the results of its implementation were measured and tabulated.

This dissertation is comprised of six chapters. Chapter 1 is a brief introduction with an outline of the problem studied by this project, a statement of the task, the justification for the study, and the methodological process followed. Chapter 2 is a discussion of the biblical and theological foundation for the evangelization and retention of youth in the Bible, which concludes with the exploration of these same themes in the writings of Ellen White. Chapter 3 is a review of the most current literature on the evangelization and retention of youth, including relevant sociological and cultural concepts and principles along with several models in use today. Chapter 4 is a description of the JLJ Youth Discipleship Initiative which includes an outline of its major components and a description of its cyclical nature. Chapter 5 is an analysis of the implementation of the initiative at the HISDA. Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the findings and concludes with suggestions for developing and encouraging discipleship for today's youth and young adults that arise from the study.

### **Limitations**

Even though the challenge of youth discipleship is an extraordinary one, the development of JLJ has been an attempt to get youth involved in ministry and evangelism, and is an element or a stepping-stone of biblical discipleship. It serves to funnel them towards the practical aspects of living discipleship out involving them specifically in evangelism. Thus the scope of this paper only evaluates the

implementation of the evangelism part of the process, and is not a comprehensive answer to every aspect of the discipling of youth.

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS AND REFLECTIONS ON EVANGELIZING AND RETAINING YOUNG PEOPLE

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will take the reader through the Old and New Testaments and extract several key biblical foundations for youth evangelism and retention. The principles enumerated are not exhaustive but merely posit a framework for understanding key elements undergirding the subject matter. Some of the key elements that appear are the nature of discipleship, the centripetal nature of the Old Testament model, the centrifugal nature of the New Testament model, and the concepts of discipline and worship as tools for youth evangelism and retention. The chapter ends with thoughts and reflections on both evangelism and retention of youth in the writings of Ellen White.

Biblical discipleship is the cornerstone of evangelizing and retaining youth. According to Eims (1978) discipleship is the process of taking a “person from the time of his conversion and helping him become a solid, dedicated, committed, fruitful, mature disciple who could in time repeat that process in the life of another” (p. 18). For Christians, the first step in discipleship begins with contemplating the example and admonition of Christ: “A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40, all Bible texts are from the NKJV unless

otherwise noted). The words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1949) seem more relevant today than ever: “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ” (p. 67). There seems to be a lack of instruction, modeling, and practice of this most basic tenet of Christianity. Though there are no simple solutions, the relevance of the challenge the church faces today in the loss of its youth will become increasingly self-evident as the concept of discipleship and the biblical principles of evangelizing and retaining young people is explored.

The concept of discipleship and the challenge of embracing a life with its principles can be traced throughout the Old and New Testament. In the New Testament the simplest form of the word *disciple* is “μαθητής . . . [simply meaning a] disciple, student, follower; a committed learner and follower, in the NT usually of Jesus Christ” (Strong, 2001, p. 1513). A rare variation of the word disciple occurs only a few times in the New Testament: “μαθητεύω . . . intrans. to be a disciple, follow as a disciple, Matt 27:57, in N.T. trans. To make a disciple of, to train in discipleship, Matt 28:19, Acts 14:21; pass. to be trained, disciplined, instructed, Matt 13:52” (Mounce, 1993, p. 306). This is the form of the word disciple found in the Great Commission of Matt 28, where the disciples are tasked with the challenge to go out and replicate themselves. Elwell (1988a) summarizes the biblical concept of disciple as “someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way” (p. 629).

Scripture describes several facets of the learning relationship between student and teacher, emphasizing a disciple as one who learns and is dedicated to the knowledge of

God in an active way, submitting to training, instruction, and discipline. The concept of an attentive following and an active commitment cannot be overstated.

Throughout the Bible, youth are specifically invited to accept this challenge. One of the most notable exhortations comes from King Solomon when he says, “remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’ ” (Eccl 12:1). This exhortation is significant in its relation to youth because it comes toward the end of Solomon’s life in the somber and reflective book of Ecclesiastes.

While discipleship is an invitation to an active participatory endeavor, we find that many of our youth today find themselves to be spectators in a stagnant posture in their local churches (Dudley, 2000, pp. 33-35). God never intended for any believer to be in such a condition, and the loss of our youth appears to be directly linked to the lack of genuine biblical discipleship principles being practiced in our churches.

### **Biblical Concepts of Evangelizing Youth**

The focal message of Scripture is clear: God has come close to His creation in order to redeem it. Evangelism really means the proclamation and dispersion of this *Good News* to all who are willing to hear and receive the message. Corrie (2007) states:

The word *evangelism* (or its more ecumenical equivalent ‘evangelization’) is derived from the Greek verb *euangelizō/euangelizesthai*. The core meaning of this verb is to proclaim the good news that the kingdom (reign) of God has come near in the person and work of Jesus, the response to which is repentance and faith. (p. 115)

Youth evangelism will then be an active proclamation of this Good News of God’s intervention on behalf of humanity.

Several biblical passages show that youth are often the specific focus of God's invitation to accept God's message and persevere in sharing it. Proverbs highlights the importance of inculcating this truth in youth when it says, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). This Biblical counsel shows the value God places on youth and their development along spiritual lines.

God also promises that our youth will be specifically empowered to accomplish a unique role in sharing this Good News. The election and role of youth in sharing the message before the "terrible day of the Lord" in the book of Joel is specifically mentioned: "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28). Here the prophet Joel identifies youth as recipients of a special anointing of God's Spirit. They are called and empowered. The Bible also offers youth encouragement when facing those who doubt their God-given role. The apostle Paul instructed a young Timothy, "let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim 4:12).

### Evangelizing Youth in the Old Testament

The Old Testament shows that evangelism at its core is an invitation to enter into a submitted relationship of learning and obedience. Bethge (2000), who was a personal friend of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, said, "Only the believer is obedient—only the obedient believe" (p. 450). This concept is significant in helping us understand the Old Testament equivalent of discipleship where sometimes the word *student* or *pupil* is used to refer to



the understudy in the teaching relationship. One of these instances can be found in 1 Chr 25:8. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for student is translated ‘disciple’ in Isa 8:16. “At 1 Chr. 25:8, תלמיד becomes ‘scholar’ in the KJV, ‘pupil’ in the RSV. At Isa. 8:16, however the closely related למך is rendered ‘disciple’ in both versions” (Davies & Allison, 1997, p. 845). There is a clear teacher-pupil relationship.

Youth in the Old Testament were part of this learning community and received exhortations and invitations to follow, submit to, and obey God. On the occasion of Nehemiah’s return to Jerusalem to rebuild its walls, the Bible describes the revival and reformation that followed the reading of the Book of the Law and its results.

Then he read from it in the open square that was in front of the Water Gate from morning until midday, before the men and women and those who could understand; and the ears of *all* the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. (Neh 8:3, emphasis added)

All the families were together, fathers, mothers, and youth.

The family unit is central to teaching. “In the context of the Old Testament, the family community is an important unit to teach and practice the Law and the worship of God” (Cha, 2008, p. 9). The family unit is a central element to all the teaching, mentoring, modeling, and living out of the principles of belief in the Old Testament.

These parents understood their role to be more than just providers. Koestenberger (2004) has said that:

Fundamentally, children, like all people, ought to be considered spiritual individuals who are uniquely created by God and yet are fallen sinners, so that the task of parenting is not merely that of behavioral conditioning but spiritual nurture and training (p. 124).

The family relationship as a means of evangelizing youth is only one of several key elements to be explored more deeply later. Other biblical examples of how the Old

Testament describes youth evangelization follow. (For additional analysis of evangelizing youth in the Old Testament see Appendix A.)

## **Isaiah 52**

One of the evangelistic passages of the Old Testament says, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news” (Isa 52:7). It indicates that Israel is to be an arm of the Lord for the salvation of all the nations. One reason feet are highlighted is that “while messengers often traveled by other means, some went on foot, a speedy means of transport over short distances” (Walton, 2009, p. 166). Blenkinsopp (2002) adds additional insight when he says, “the passage about the messenger and the message (52:7-10) would follow the attempt to energize Jerusalem (vv 1-2) naturally providing the motivation for new hope and the prospect of a different future” (p. 341). This encouragement encompasses the family unit, infusing it with purpose and meaning. The Apostle Paul quoted this passage in Rom 10:15, confirming the Gospel imperative for all believers, including young people.

## **Israel’s Mission to the Gentiles**

Isaiah 42:6 speaks specifically of the *election* element of evangelism. “I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, And will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, As a light to the Gentiles.” The messenger is clearly elected and given His message. “A servant of Yahveh, that is, one who acts on his behalf and does his bidding, is now presented . . . [as a] commissioning or installation in office” (Blenkinsopp, 2002, p. 209).

The election of a messenger is key to our understanding of evangelization. The Israelites were not *light* in and of themselves, but when God chose them they received the light. There is a powerful connection between God's original intent in creation and Israel. Keck (2001) notes that, "the word (bērît 'ām), 'covenant to the nations,' is used, in parallel to ('ôr gôyim), 'light of the nations.' Israel was formed, like the first human being, with this particular role in mind" (p. 364). In the same way that Adam was created with the purpose of glorifying the creator, so now Israel and their youth are formed with the purpose of bringing others to the knowledge of God.

### **Israel is Chosen to Witness**

The declaration, "You are My witnesses, says the LORD," in Isa 43:10 carries legal ramifications. "Usually witnesses are called in to give testimony on behalf of another, in this case God. That is, they are in possession of information or evidence necessary to establish a positive verdict for someone else" (Keck, 2001, p. 377). Here evangelism is seen as proclaiming the truth of God's character. God tells Israel to witness on His behalf. Elwell (1988b) explains this further:

In the judicial procedure outlined in the OT one witness was not adequate for personal testimony against anyone, but two or three witnesses were required (Dt 17:6; 19:15). This principle was ingrained in Jewish law and is reiterated in the NT (cf. Mt 18:16; 2 Cor 13:1). (pp. 2154-2155)

The youth of Israel were privy to the acts of God and therefore could be called upon to witness. As His witnesses God invites His people to abandon exclusivity, avoiding arrogance as His chosen ones. But this is not something Israel did very well.

## **Old Testament Centripetal Focus in God’s Missional Plan**

Many theologians have noted that evangelization in the Old Testament is centripetal in nature. Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary (2010) defines centripetal as “proceeding or acting in a direction toward a center or axis . . . tending toward centralization.” The *Dictionary of Mission Theology* states, “In the OT, Yahweh, though Lord of the earth, establishes his primary relationship with the people of Israel, not however for their own sake, but so that they may be a ‘light to the nations’ ” (Corrie, 2007, p. 265). Jerusalem was a key geographical center, where the surrounding nations, as well as those passing through, could see the light of God. Some have pointed to a “come and see” evangelization strategy. However, the following evidence of a centrifugal focus through the exploration of messianic passages of the suffering servant, shows an expanded outreach:

Mission is often thought of as a NT and post NT phenomenon. Is it possible to read the OT also as a missional text? The clearest justification for doing so is that Jesus himself told his disciples to read it that way. In Luke 24 he twice surveys the whole canon of OT Scripture and claims that ‘this is what is written’: both that the Messiah would come, suffer, die and rise again; and that repentance and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to the nations (vv. 45-47). The first claim reads Scripture messianically; the second reads Scripture missiologically—and Jesus urges this double hermeneutical strategy on those who read the OT in conscious relation to himself. (p. 269)

This evidence suggests that the youth of Israel would have both an outward and inward focus in their evangelization.

## **Joshua Leads On Behalf of His Family**

One of the most powerful challenges Joshua issued to Israel: “And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But

as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Josh 24:15). Keck (1994) writes that the Israelites at this point were considering embracing polytheism: “They apparently assume naively that they can serve Yahweh and other gods at the same time” (p. 714). Once again the family unit is brought to the forefront, and young and old are asked to choose wisely between the path of life or the path of death. Joshua also models the significance of parental responsibility and paternal leadership in the home. Parental direction and accountability are shown here to be effective. This may prove successful in the evangelization and retention of youth particularly in a time of relativism.

### Evangelizing Youth in the New Testament

In the New Testament our understanding of evangelization is expanded by the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It is in the incarnation that humanity can see most powerfully God’s overwhelming desire for its salvation. There are several key moments in the history of the early Christian Church that provide special insight into the biblical principles for youth evangelism. The first one we will consider is the Magna Carta of the Gospel—the Great Commission (for additional analysis of evangelizing youth in the New Testament see Appendix A).

#### **The Great Commission**

The command of Jesus to go out and make disciples is pivotal to our understanding of evangelization in the New Testament. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:19). Jesus tells His disciples, “As you have followed me, go out and invite others to follow me as well.” It is both a privilege and a right for the disciples of Jesus to do this work.

Elwell (1988a) says:

At the time of his ascension Christ commissioned the first disciples to ‘make disciples of all nations’ (Mt. 28:19); hence the term ‘disciple’ is also used in the Book of Acts to describe believers, those who confess Christ. Though they have not been directly called by Christ himself, such disciples are called by Christ’s Spirit through the message delivered by the first disciples (p. 630).

There is a pronounced authority in the words of Jesus because He is now speaking as one who has overcome, and this victory frames his command. Ridderbos (1987) adds:

The final words of the Gospel are absolute and all-encompassing: ‘all authority . . . all nations . . . always.’ The veil that had covered Jesus’ revelation of Himself was finally cast off, and the messianic secret gave way to the open proclamation of the unlimited power of the Son of Man (Dan. 7:13-14) (p. 552).

This commissioning in the book of Matthew is a foundation for our understanding of youth evangelization and retention as it amplifies the concept of genuine biblical discipleship. It shows an unequalled, all-encompassing, commission with unique elements worthy of exploration. The distinctive characteristics in the Great Commission, taken individually, will later give us a comprehensive and helpful view of the totality of the Great Commission.

### **Source of the Great Commission: God**

The origin of the Great Commission is God. “Let us observe in the first place, the honour which God has put on our Lord Jesus Christ . . . in the counsels of the eternal Trinity, Jesus, as Son of man, is appointed heir of all things” (Ryle, 1951, p. 408). The Father is the one who appointed Jesus Christ as the heir of all things. The book of Philippians concurs by saying, “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name” (Phil 2:9). God is therefore, the originator, the author, and the authority behind the Great Commission.

## **Scope of the Great Commission: All the World**

The scope of the great commission is the whole world. The command of Jesus for His disciples, young and old, to go to the whole world would be daunting, if it were not for His insurmountable victory over death. “Authority was given to him in both heaven and earth so that he who once reigned in heaven might also reign on earth through the faith of his believers” (Simonetti, 2002, p. 313). William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison (1997) add, “The Jewish mission is now the world mission . . . universal lordship means universal mission” (p. 684). Simonetti continues, “Having put into their hands a summary of Christian teaching, which is expressed in the form of baptism, he commands them to go out into the whole world” (p. 313).

The scope of their message is global. Ridderbos (1987) says:

For that purpose the apostles had to go to ‘all nations.’ Jesus had called the disciples to preach the Gospel earlier, but at that time their terrain was limited to the land of the Jews . . . the bounds of particularism were finally removed. The glory of Christ’s resurrection is manifested by His breaking the power of darkness, not only in a limited region, but through all the world, and by His bringing all nations back to God. (pp. 554-555)

## **Message of the Great Commission: The Gospel**

Jesus does not leave His disciples without a powerful message. It is, after all,

*Good News*. Corrie (2007) says:

The content of the message of the early church became known as to euangelion, the good news. . . . In 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Paul tells us that the good news focuses on the death (for our sins), burial, and (especially) the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.” (p. 115).

The Good News, which the disciples now carry, is superior to that of their forefathers. Simonetti (2001) says:

Moses and the prophets spoke of temporal promises of an earthly land. The apostles proclaimed the kingdom of heaven and all that this implies. Not only does the loftiness of their message characterize them as greater, but so does the lowly nature of their obedience. (p. 195)

### **Method: Discipleship, Baptism, Teaching, and Calling**

The primary method of evangelism that Jesus instructs His disciples to use is discipleship. He has modeled this and now He instructs them to do the same. “The word ‘disciple’ comes from Lat. *discipulus*. Both terms are used for the Gk. *mathētēs* (pupil), which refers especially to the disciples of Jesus” (Fahlbusch, 1999, p. 850). This means that the disciples are to employ the teacher-pupil paradigm.

“The call of Jesus, ‘Follow me’ (Mark 1:17), which is always directed to individuals, initiates discipleship” (Fahlbusch, p. 851). Baptism is to be their rite of initiation while instruction from the teachings of Jesus is to be their lifelong pursuit.

Davies and Allison (1997) say:

Concerning the order of the ecclesiastical verbs in vv. 19-20, perhaps one first hears the call to discipleship, then enters the community through baptism, and finally learns instruction with a view towards obedience. In this case [discipleship] could refer to pre-baptismal instruction. But it is better to regard [discipleship] not as the first in a series but as a general imperative which is filled out (although not exhausted) by what follows: baptism and instruction in obedience belong to discipleship. (p. 686)

The life of the disciple, whether young or old, is one of continually receiving mentoring in the teachings of the Gospel and inviting others to follow as well.

### **Evangelism in the Apostolic Church**

Emil Brunner (1931) wrote, “The church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning” (p. 108). After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ the early church



set about living this metaphor. They understood clearly the reason for their existence and approached their mission with precision, persevering despite overwhelming odds.

The apostles, full of the Holy Spirit, rose to the occasion. The early church lived out the teachings of Jesus and was characterized by self-sacrifice. Davies and Allison (1997) explain some of the challenges they faced:

Modern scholars sometimes leave the impression that a Jewish believer in Jesus could leave Judaism as easily as a person can today. . . . To leave Judaism meant not simply to exchange one religious group for another but to move from one society to another: it involved the painful severing not only of family and cultic ties but being cut off from the whole life of a community upon which one was socially and economically dependent. (p. 695)

The Bible shows here that any evangelism done for youth must always present the cross and the death of self. Any other invitation falls short of true biblical discipleship.

### **Witnesses in Jerusalem and Beyond**

Christ gave the early apostles clear instructions concerning where to accomplish their mission: They were to begin in Jerusalem, continue in Judea and Samaria, and finally encompass the entire world. This progression was divinely strategic. “It was necessary to announce Christ’s first coming to the Jews, lest they have a good excuse for saying that the Lord rejected them because he had sent the apostles to the Gentiles and the Samaritans” (Simonetti, 2001, p. 194).

### **Centrifugal Approach With Concentric Circles**

As has already been mentioned, some theologians contrast the Old and New Testament approaches to mission.

Some have discerned a distinction between the centripetal mission of the OT (the nations are invited into Zion to discover God’s saving grace), and the centrifugal

mission of the NT (the church takes God's saving grace out to the nations). (Corrie, 2007, p. 265)

Acts 1:8 records Christ's direct command to the apostles: They were to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and then move forward in power.

### **The Role of the Holy Spirit in Evangelism**

Jesus instructed the disciples to wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, signifying the fuel for evangelism. According to Robert L. Plummer (2001), "Luke presents the person of the Holy Spirit as the primary basis and guiding force of the early church's mission" (p. 95). Plummer continues describing Paul's understanding of the Holy Spirit's role:

Paul was likely familiar with the Great Commission . . . yet, Paul also knew that divine requirements could never be met by those who walk according to the flesh, but only by those who walk according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4). (p. 97)

The Holy Spirit "promised to be not only with these disciples but also with all who would subsequently believe after them" (Simonetti, 2002, p. 313). Every generation that faithfully accepts the call to discipleship will be enabled by the promise and presence of the Holy Spirit.

### **Evangelism in Pauline Epistles**

At the death of Stephen, the Bible says those stoning him laid their garments at the feet of a *young man* named Saul (Acts 7:57). Although Saul's age at his conversion is not specified, there is evidence to indicate he was fairly young. Saul's conversion unleashed a powerful force for the early church in accomplishing its mission. His zeal for the Gospel eclipsed his former passion of destroying the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Alexander (2000) notes that "from the time of his conversion and calling on the road to

Damascus, the Gospel, the Good News of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ, became the determinative focus of Paul's whole life (Acts 9)" (p. 666). The fearlessness and zeal of Paul before and after his conversion is a hallmark of youth. God's plan channeled that energy and refocused it on the salvation of souls.

### **Gospel Has Gone to the Whole World**

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul confirmed that the first generation of disciples had spread the gospel to the then known world by saying, "the word of the truth of the Gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in *all* the world, and is bringing forth fruit" (Col 1:5-6, emphasis added). He adds, "the Gospel which you heard, which was preached to *every* creature under heaven" (v. 23, emphasis added). This dramatic announcement points to the reality that such an accomplishment was only possible because the early church lived out the biblical principles of discipleship. This faith was not a mere intellectual or doctrinal assent, but a living, breathing, dynamic faith that turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Sweet (1999) says, "We are not called to be the light of the light. We are called to be the light of the world, following in the path of the true light, the light of life" (p. 46). The evangelism and discipleship of the New Testament has nothing to do with being a spectator or warming a pew. It takes the Old Testament principles and expands them for a more thorough revelation of mission.

### **The Gospel Must be Contextualized**

One of the most significant New Testament principles found in the Pauline Epistles is the need to contextualize the Gospel. In every era the church has had to face this challenge, because the Gospel must speak to different people, in different places,

from a variety of cultures, and at different times. Paul said, “I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22). Paul certainly made the Gospel relevant for youth. Lesslie Newbigin (1989) reminds us “no gospel is pure, it is always embodied in a culture” (p. 184), yet he is quick to point out the dangers of relativism even as he speaks to his ecumenical audience.

Martyn Percy (2005) has correctly said, “the lesson from Pentecost is that theology (or Christianity) is always spoken in tongues, so that each can understand in their own language” (p. 13). When we speak of contextualizing the Gospel, however, we do not speak of sacrificing principle, but rather, of placing the message of the Gospel in a vehicle that is most readily received by the audience. Even though Paul is a good example of making the Gospel relevant to his audience, he was careful to keep the Gospel message free of cultural misunderstandings as he carried the Gospel into many fields of labor.

### **Biblical Concepts of Youth Retention**

God is not only concerned that His children hear and receive the message of the Gospel, but He also desires that they remain, live, and share its message throughout their lives. The Bible offers several principles that facilitate retention, some of which we will examine in the following pages.

#### **The Concept of Permanence or Retention**

The Bible also speaks of permanence and retention in the New Testament. It is not God’s will for the message of truth to come into the lives of believers and find

infertile soil, unable to create strong roots. God desires the path of discipleship to be one marked by an ever increasing growth and vitality.

### **Disciples Bear Fruit and Remain**

The Gospel of John chapter 15 describes God's desire in the following way, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should *remain*, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16, emphasis added). God's desire that we bear fruit is a key component of biblical discipleship, and genuine discipleship is marked by healthy growth. One 19th century commentator expressed it this way: "and that your fruit should remain—showing itself to be an imperishable and ever growing principle" (Faussett, 1871, John 15:16). Also, it is not enough to simply bear fruit; the results of discipleship must have permanence. Typically our evangelism models have focused on reaping, but some would argue that there has not been an equally aggressive pursuit of retaining the harvest.

Historically evangelism has focused on catching rather than keeping and on teaching rather than being or doing. Evangelism is more than enlisting; it is preventing members from dropping out as well. (Norton, 2005, p.129)

In our evangelization there must be an appropriate balance between harvesting and retaining the harvest. God is not interested in merely increasing His people numerically for a season just to see a vast majority drop out after time. Genuine biblical discipleship will provide both increase and long-term retention.

Sadly, the membership records of most churches do not effectively measure the success of their retention. Speaking about a typical SDA congregation, Sahlin (1989) says

that “on most Sabbaths less than half of the membership is present” (pp. 18-20).

Congregations usually have many more members on their books than those who are actively participating, while some growing congregations will typically have more people in attendance than number of members.

### **God is Interested in Saving Everyone**

Another retention principle found throughout scripture can be seen in God’s persistence to save the lost. The biblical story of the lost sheep in Luke 15:4-7 shows God’s willingness to save even one. Simple economics would tell us that 99 out of 100 is not a terrible rate of loss. Every venture can expect some losses. But this is not the case when it comes to salvation. God is “not willing that *any* should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9, emphasis added). Martha P. Sterne (1998) highlights the compassion of Jesus for the lost by saying, “Jesus seems to care inordinately about the ones who aren’t here. This interest in the absent may seem unreasonable to those of us who show up and keep the institutional church humming, but it is the gospel” (p. 781).

The biblical account of Sodom and Gomorrah shows how Lot chose the valley and city life because of the affluence and temporal benefits it afforded.

And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere [before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah] like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. (Gen 13:10)

God had mercy on Lot even though he chose to go in and live among the “wicked men of Sodom [who] were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD” (v. 13).

God’s mercy for Lot extended to the inhabitants of those sinful cities. Through him, God made a final attempt to reach Sodom’s wicked inhabitants and to avert their

tragic end. The story climaxes with a refusal by the cities wicked men to accept Lot's offer of his *virgin daughters* in exchange for protecting his *guests*. This was a shocking proposal indeed, when we consider that

the description of the beginning of Genesis 19 of Lot sitting at the gate of the city is taken to mean that Lot sat at the gate of the city because he was a judge (or even the chief judge). (Begleiter, 2004, p. 51)

Sodom's utter lawlessness is striking; God's loving mercy in sending two angels to save only four people out of an entire city reveals the lengths to which He will go for salvation. This message of mercy is undiluted by the tragic fact that Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt.

### **The Family as a Means of Retaining Youth**

Throughout the Old Testament we see the family unit as a significant supportive structure providing order and encouragement. "The family constitutes the basic unit of the human community. Within that cell of intimate relationships, parents are entrusted with the responsibility of guiding and correcting children" (Elwell, 1988a, p. 632). Scripture exhorts parents to, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov 22:6). God has given parents spiritual authority over their children and they are to educate them along spiritual lines. In spite of the challenges, parents are not to despair. Elwell (1988a) states:

The biblical view is essentially pessimistic about the perfectibility of human nature. Hence parents are urged not to leave children at the mercy of their own natural tendencies. Undisciplined children are potential victims of the powerful conditioning exerted by a predominantly pagan culture. (p. 632)

## **Discipline**

The evangelization and retention of youth begins in the home. The primary tool parent's have in directing their children along spiritual lines is discipline. The divine command to be fruitful and multiply also enjoins humanity to educate their offspring correctly. The words of the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1955), though written long ago, are still relevant today:

Through marriage men are brought into being for the glorification and service of Jesus and for the increase of his kingdom. This means that marriage is not only a matter of producing children, but also of educating them to be obedient to Jesus Christ. (p. 183)

The correct use of discipline is more than an appropriate tool in the hand of a Godly parent—it is an act of love. Only loving parents can truly discipline. Therefore, discipline is a Godly concept. Butterick (1962) defines discipline in Hebrew, “in the OT the usual terms are יָמוּ, ‘to chasten, correct, punish,’ and מוֹסֵר, ‘chastisement, discipline, instruction’ ” (p. 846). The Hebrew definition is rich with descriptions of valuable educative qualities. Biblical discipleship incorporates the principles of discipline in order to accomplish its aims.

## **Worship as a Means of Retaining Youth**

The worship of God through the sanctuary service of the Old Testament was a significant method for retaining youth in Israel. The Bible tells us that worship was a corporate experience. The significance and impact of the sanctuary on the life of the Israelite believers cannot be overstated.

The Bible tells us that worship was a joyful experience. “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’ ” (Ps 122:1). Even though Merrill C.



Tenney's (1975) thoughts were penned several decades ago, his analysis is useful today: "The oldest form of worship in the Old Testament is that connected to family. Even before Israel became a people, it was already a worshipping family, the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (p. 976).

Worship was a corporate experience, a tool in uniting the family and focusing on God as provider and sustainer. It was this unity that fostered retention. After the Exodus, the corporate form of worship took on a more expansive form with the worship in the sanctuary. Tenney (1975) goes on to say,

After the Exodus, when the children of Israel became a nation, and national forms of worship were established, the family continued to play an important part in worship. The rise of the synagogue later made possible a more continuous form of congregational life and offered new opportunities for instruction. Even this did not oust the family as a unit of worship. (p. 976)

The expression, "the family that prays together stays together," is as true now as it was then.

### **Involvement in Ministry as a Means of Retaining Youth**

Biblical discipleship is interactive, participatory, and involving. This is one of the keys for the retention of youth. Those who collaborate with God in His divine mission will be strengthened and are more likely to remain faithful. Simonetti (2001) shows how Jesus sent His disciples out at a strategic time in their development:

Note the careful timing of their mission. They were not sent out at the beginning of their walk with him. They were not sent out until they had sufficiently benefited by following him daily. (p. 192)

But send them out he did! Part of discipleship is to be sent out. There is a time for learning and a time for implementing. The Bible describes the singular joy with which

they came back when it says, “Then the seventy returned with joy” (Luke 10:17). After the disciples had seen what Jesus did, and after they participated in His ministry, they were able to go out and replicate it. This joy is a significant element in the retention of youth. Youth are looking to be part of something meaningful and significant to dedicate their lives to.

### **Discipleship: Committed and Connected**

Retention of youth will occur if there is a fresh abiding in Christ. Daily discipleship is not a one-time event, but a continual surrender and submission to the principles of Christ as elaborated in Scripture. Spiritual growth has been shown to increase or decrease—there is no static existence for discipleship. This abiding will be achieved by a balanced experience characterized by care and dedication. Elwell (1988a) states:

In the history of the Christian church the ideals and even the practice of Christian discipleship have tended to veer between extremes. For some being a Christian disciple has amounted to nothing other than a carefully cultivated and controlled worldliness. Others have identified discipleship with the adoption of an ascetic discipline. More recently discipleship has come to be thought of by some in wholly secular terms, involving emancipation from ‘religion’ in any of its forms. Such extremes indicate that the balance between a Christian disciple being in the world but not of the world is difficult to achieve and to sustain. (p. 631)

A key to remaining balanced is an unceasing focus on Jesus and His teachings. This is part of what Christ refers to in John 15. Weir (2004) puts it this way: “God’s word is life; it is one of our connections to him. Scripture reveals God’s character, nature, and plan. The Holy Spirit breathes life into the written Word and Jesus was the Word in flesh” (p. 44). The bible uses the term *abiding* to describe fruitful and faithful discipleship. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who *abides* in Me, and I in him,

bears much fruit” (John 15:5, emphasis added). Stamper (2007) exegetes the word “abide” further to broaden our understanding by saying,

The verb *abide* (μένω), which appears twice in the discussion of the disciple whom Jesus loved in 21:22-23, is used a total of 10 times in 15:4-10 alongside the four iterations of the phrase *bear fruit* (φέρειν καρπόν), emphasizing the source of the fruit even more than the fruitfulness. (p. 170)

Youth will remain on course in their disciple journey as they maintain a desperate dependence on God. Depending on God and making their walk with Him a priority will characterize the life of a vibrant young disciple who remains.

### **Evangelism and Retention in the Writings of Ellen White**

The writings of Ellen White provide us with several principles that relate to both the evangelization and retention of youth. Amazingly, her counsels are as relevant today as they were when she wrote them long ago. Her writings reveal a passion and zeal for the mission that is reflected in the history of Adventism. SDAs have an uncommon focus and sense of urgency for evangelism, which must never be lost.

#### **Evangelism**

When speaking of youth in need of salvation, Ellen White (1923) said:

Nigh and afar off are souls, not only the youth but those of all ages, who are in poverty and distress, sunken in sin, and weighed down with a sense of guilt. It is the work of God’s servants to seek for these souls, to pray with them and for them, and lead them step by step to the Saviour. (p. 14)

She made special mention of the youth in this passage as being part of the larger whole of society who need the message of salvation. She seemed to focus on the youth before mentioning the others who also need help. Especially important is her mention of the “weighing down of guilt.” Those who have worked long enough with youth will

know that they struggle with guilt. Today's youth face significant challenges to their sense of self-worth, belonging, and guilt.

Ellen White also encouraged those who work with youth to invite them to make a decision for Christ. Many today are concerned to see youth get ahead academically, thinking this is how they will make their greatest contribution to society. While this is obviously a noble goal, it seems fewer numbers of youth are choosing ministry as a profession in recent years. Ellen White (1912) challenged the leaders of her day to guide the youth directly into evangelizing when she said:

The Lord calls upon those connected with our sanitariums, publishing houses, and schools to teach the youth to do evangelistic work. Our time and energy must not be so largely employed in establishing sanitariums, food stores, and restaurants that other lines of work will be neglected. Young men and young women who should be engaged in the ministry, in Bible work, and in the canvassing work should not be bound down to mechanical employment.

By no means does this advice invalidate the legitimacy and importance of the many other professions open to youth. However, there is a question as to whether the vast majority of our youth are being mentored, disciplined, and encouraged to choose ministry professions. Ellen White (1946) clearly stated, "The highest of all work is ministry in its various lines, and it should be *kept before the youth* that there is no work more blessed of God than that of the gospel minister" (p. 23, emphasis added). Other statements emphasize this concept:

The standard-bearers are falling, and *young men* must be prepared to take the places left vacant, that the message may still be proclaimed. The aggressive warfare is to be extended. Those who have youth and strength are to go into the dark places of the earth, to call perishing souls to repentance. (White, 1948a, p. 104, emphasis added)

There is no class of persons capable of accomplishing more in the warfare against intemperance than are *God-fearing youth*. In this age the young men in our cities should unite as an army, firmly and decidedly to set themselves against every form of

selfish, health-destroying indulgence. What a power they might be for good! How many they might save from becoming demoralized in the halls and gardens fitted up with music and other attractions to allure the youth. (White, 1949, p. 235, emphasis added)

Evangelization for the early SDA Church was primary rather than secondary.

Today the church seems to be involved in many things, one of which should be evangelism, but currently the emphasis on evangelism is weak.

Another principle of evangelism found in the writings of Ellen White is that the gospel needs to be presented with power. Whether the gospel was proclaimed for the benefit of young or old, “the gospel is to be presented, not as a lifeless theory, but as a living force to change the life. God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power” (1940, p. 826). The Apostle Paul echoed this reality when he says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16).

Today’s youth do not need entertainment in our churches; they are looking for a genuine life transforming experience. If the gospel were presented as it should be with its full power and force, the youth would flock to hear it. On the necessity of reaching the youth in particular, Ellen White (1948b) stated:

Very much has been lost to the cause of truth by a lack of attention to the spiritual needs of the young. Ministers of the gospel should form a happy acquaintance with the youth of their congregations. Many are reluctant to do this, but their neglect is a sin in the sight of faith, yet whose hearts have never been touched by the power of divine grace. How can we who claim to be the servants of God pass on day after day, week after week, indifferent to their condition? (p. 115)

Some confuse entertainment with amusement, an end in itself, but the Gospel will always possess an innate and holy attraction. These statements give us some idea of the emphasis in the writings of Ellen White in regards to the evangelization and

empowerment of youth. The most relevant principles show the need to make special efforts for them and their empowerment for courageous service.

### Retention

Part of the need of the church is to not only evangelize youth but also retain them, and both concepts are well supported in the writings of Ellen White, as well as in Scripture. She has much to say concerning the strategies and diversions the enemy uses in order to distract and destroy the youth. White (1900) wrote:

Our great adversary is constantly working with power to allure the youth to self indulgence, pride, and extravagance, that their minds and hearts may be so fully taken up with these things that there will be no place for God in their affections. . . . Every influence brought to bear upon the young people to preserve in their hearts true, unaffected humility, and the knowledge of the divine will, will aid in holding them back from being corrupted with the vices of this age (p. 98).

Parents and leaders need to be proactive in engaging the youth with *every* possible influence at our disposal for their salvation. Youth work needs to be characterized by sincerity and openness. An open heart for youth is a sure bridge to connecting with them. White (1948a) highlighted the need to empathize with youth, connect with them, and kindly and sincerely sympathize with them, by saying:

Why should labor for the youth in our borders not be regarded as missionary work of the highest kind? It requires the most delicate tact, the most watchful consideration, and the most earnest prayer for heavenly wisdom . . . but kindness, courtesy, and the sympathy which flows from a heart filled with love to Jesus, will gain their confidence, and save them from many a snare of the enemy. . . . We must meet them where they are if we would keep them. . . . Let us remember the claim of God upon us to make the path to heaven bright and attractive. (p. 207)

Once youth have been reached with this sincere and prayerful spirit, greater discipleship awareness can be given. The invitation to follow Jesus can be defined for them in more meaningful ways. This training must be systematic and encompassing

diverse fields and methods. There is no one size fits all. In this way they will begin to see the great and wonderful work Jesus has invited them to participate in them, and how specifically they are suited by God himself to carry out their calling. Ellen White (1948a) also extended her counsel in this regard with the following thought:

When the youth give their hearts to God, our responsibility for them does not cease. They must be interested in the Lord's work, and led to see that He expects them to do something to advance His cause. . . . They must be taught how to labor for the Master. They must be trained, disciplined, drilled in the best methods of winning souls to Christ. . . . Let the different branches of missionary effort be systematically laid out. . . . Thus they will learn to work for God. (p. 212)

These are the principles of a thriving, vibrant, and dynamic experience of genuine biblical discipleship. Ellen White rejected the spectator or entertainment model of youth ministry that is put on by ministry performers, which I would describe as asking the youth to sit down and watch the *show*. Nor is it enough to involve youth in the ministry show without guiding them to continually grow in the understanding of why they do what they do. What Ellen White described here can only be accomplished with dedicated leaders who understand their role of modeling and mentoring in discipleship principles. The amount of dedication needed was set out by what Ellen White (1948a) said in the following passage:

The youth need more than a casual notice, more than an occasional word of encouragement. They need painstaking prayer and careful labor. Only those whose heart is filled with love and sympathy will be able to reach the youth who are apparently careless and indifferent. Not all can be helped in the same way (pp. 207-212).

Genuine ministry and interest is what is needed in order to participate in the work of retaining our youth. One of the characteristics of youth today is they can detect insincerity fairly quickly. Any approach that appears to make youth just part of the

church's agenda will meet with failure. They may participate for a time out of a sense of duty, but their heart will not be in it. The needs of youth in understanding and receiving the Gospel will have to be carefully designed. The methods used in the past may not have the same success with newer generations. Because of this we can benefit immensely by accepting and implementing Ellen White's counsel on embracing and utilizing new and innovative evangelism and retention methods. In this regard Mrs. White (1946) said:

New methods must be introduced. God's people must awake to the necessities of the time in which they are living. God has men whom He will call into His service—men who will not carry forward the work in the lifeless way in which it has been carried forward in the past. (p. 70)

Innovation is always in the form of communication but the core values of acceptance and a deep commitment to transformation do not change. Because of the unprecedented changes in the current culture, the same strategies and methods that brought some measure of success in the past will not be as effective today. The church needs to be fearlessly courageous with a singular focus on the salvation and retention of our youth. It desperately needs them in order to accomplish the mission God has given it. They can provide the strength and vitality, and courage and fearlessness, which is lacking in the church today. "With such an army of workers as our youth, rightly trained, might furnish, how soon the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-coming Saviour might be carried to the whole world!" (White, 1952, p. 271). Youth are the *army* the church has been waiting for to finish the work.

### **Summary**

We have traced the theological foundations for the evangelization and retention of youth through the Old and New Testaments. In so doing, we have highlighted some of



the most significant biblical passages that speak and inform this discussion. In this study a holistic pattern emerges showing youth as an integral part of the family unit as well as being enjoined by God singularly with the call of embracing biblical discipleship. Ellen White also has given substantial perspective and counsel in her writings by directly calling for the evangelization and retention of our youth. The force of her emphasis cannot be overstated. In the few passages explored there are direct and clear exhortations as to the importance and imperative to act concertedly for and with youth.

## CHAPTER 3

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

The review of the current literature has been very revealing in helping to create a conceptual backdrop of the most pertinent elements, cultural and sociological, affecting youth discipleship today. One of the most significant elements affecting youth discipleship and consequently evangelism is the phenomenon of adolescence. Taken alone it is fascinating enough, but when combined with the postmodern and quickly post-Christian cultural contexts a daunting reality for ministry emerges. Through the pages of this chapter the reader will see these and many more elements coming to the fore, which will need to be accounted for in order for youth evangelism to be effective. The chapter ends with a review of some of the current youth discipleship initiatives.

In my journey through the literature on youth evangelism I came across a book entitled, *The Lost Art of Disciple Making*. What surprised me about this book is that it was written in 1978! If disciple making was a lost art over thirty years ago, how far from the ideals of discipleship are we today?

In his book, Eims (1978) describes the process of discipleship as taking a “person from the time of his conversion and helping him become a solid, dedicated, committed, fruitful, mature disciple who could in time repeat that process in the life of another” (p.

18). Herein lays the greatest challenge in youth discipleship, if not all discipleship. The ideal is not only to see someone converted but also to see them able to actively reproduce themselves and remain committed, thriving, and vibrant.

But how is this possible with the fragmentation of Christianity? It seems the purpose and identity of what it means to be a Christian is unclear and perhaps unknown. No religion is more fragmented than Christianity: “There are 19 major world religions, which are subdivided into a total of 270 large religious groups, and many smaller ones. More than 34,000 separate Christian groups have been identified in the world” (Barrett, Kurian, & Johnson, 2001, p. 45). Some SDA Christians suffer from some of the same lack of clarity regarding their calling and reason for existence. Because “close to 80% of ‘born again’ Christians committed their life to Jesus before they reached the age of twenty-one” (Barna, 2004), the priority of youth evangelization and retention cannot be overstated. It is during this unique time that youth are most open to the message of the Gospel, and growing in discipleship becomes a critical next step.

David Wraight (2007) expands this reality by noting the effectiveness of youth in reaching youth, “When it comes to reaching young people with the gospel, the most effective agents of Jesus are other young people” (p. 60). Therefore, two priorities in evangelizing youth are critical: the startling reality that most believers make their decision in their youth, and the need to equip those young believers with the task of engaging their role as the most effective and efficient evangelizers. Yet there are some identifiable reasons and factors, which have emerged in taking stock of the current situation.

A study of current literature has revealed identifiable sociological and cultural realities that affect the current state of youth evangelization and retention, even as the biblical imperative continues to challenge some of the perceived limitations.

## **Concepts**

### Adolescence

Although the concept of adolescence is a somewhat recent social phenomenon, its sociological reality and impact on youth is supported by a fairly long-standing body of literature. Adolescence is loosely defined as the transition between childhood and adulthood. It is described in a variety of ways, but Oestreicher (2008) insists that adolescence, in its broadest terms, is a “cultural phenomenon” (p. 29).

Since the invention of the social institution of adolescence over a hundred years ago, adolescence has rarely been questioned . . . the bargain of adolescence—dependence and education now, responsibility and independence later—has worked reasonably well . . . (Mahan, Warren, & White, 2008, p. 4)

Brian J. Mahan, Michael Warren, and David F. White (2008) illustrate the significance of when the concept of adolescence emerged in relationship to ministry.

They state that the first recorded youth ministry initiative was started

at the Williston Congregational Church in Portland, Maine, in 1881 under the leadership of Frances Clark . . . this youth ministry could not have emerged a century earlier and only gained momentum from the displacement of youth from other social roles. (Mahan, Warren, & White, p. 9)

However, although their point is important, the extensive literature on the sociological and cultural milieu in which the concept of adolescence arose is beyond the scope of this research.

Adolescence is a genuine phenomenon that needs to be accounted for because it affects this discussion. There are significant ramifications influencing and affecting the development of appropriate and successful strategies for evangelizing and retaining youth and young adults. There typically has also been a logical distinction between the term youth, which is generally applied to those in their teenage years, and the term young adult, which is generally referring to those in their twenties. Currently, however, evidence suggests that adolescence appears to be extending far beyond these typical designations. John Drane (2008) has said, “. . . maturity is no longer age related, and for many people adolescence now seems to extend into their thirties” (p. 26).

The literature increasingly reflects the reluctance of most young adults to fully embrace adult roles that require full-fledged responsibilities including but not limited to marriage, full-time employment, and economic emancipation from parents. These realities certainly have implications for the evangelism imperative and must therefore be accounted for. Regardless of the age difference categories between youth and young adults, they appear to share many characteristics of adolescence. This fact gives us common ground with which to proceed in our study of evangelization and retention of youth and young adults.

#### Disaffiliation

Years ago when a person left the church they were considered to have apostatized. The word apostasy goes beyond ceasing attendance, but also includes a rejection of the church's beliefs and/or becoming an antagonist. There may be some local conference record keeping that currently maintains this terminology for describing those who have

ceased to be attending members of local congregations. However, a subtle difference exists between disaffiliation and apostasy, and this distinction needs to be clarified because many of the young people who have left the SDA Church have disaffiliated rather than apostatized.

Disaffiliation is described as “leaving a faith, or a religious group or community.” (Wikipedia, 2010c). Although there is some reference here to a process described as the “reverse of conversion” it is possible to withdraw from a faith community while still retaining faith. Determining which is the case becomes significant when considering the evangelization and retention of youth because the concept of *identity* has become more fluid in contemporary culture. Mahan, Warren, and White (2008) have correctly described this culture as a “culture of consumerism” (p. xi) in which people tend to more frequently reconsider their attachments to agencies or people groups that had heretofore provided their identities.

As young people begin to look at the culture around them and struggle with their faith experience they will be more prone to disaffiliate from their church even though they may retain remnants of their beliefs and faith. This can be frustrating as Rahn and Linhart (2009) point out, “Despite what we think about post-modern influences, we live in a culture where many profess a belief in God, though that belief doesn’t directly affect their actions or church attendance” (p. 116). Sayers expresses the challenge of identity powerfully when he says, “We do not look to God for a sense of self. Rather, we look inside and find very little, and thus we become obsessed with cultivating our image.” (2010, p. 30) The image cultivated by our youth may or may not include affiliation with the church.

In the continual quest for identity many are turning away from a faith experience that lacks meaning and power. Sayers (2010) describes our challenge in this age as cultivating a “horizontal self” saying:

The entertainment age and the horizontal self have led us to divorce what we believe from what we experience, see, and feel. The elephant in the living room of contemporary Christianity is people’s ability to simply sit in church, to consume the experience the way one would a great sporting event, a thrilling movie, or an exciting theme park ride, and then to dispose of it, totally unchanged at the soul level, as they leave the sanctuary. Sure, they might feel challenged, encouraged, or even moved, but the horizontal self simply ‘feels’ the experience and moves on. Don’t get me wrong: this can happen anywhere—in traditional churches, emerging churches and contemporary churches. (p. 51)

As youth and young adults come in and out of the *experience* of church, they may decide it does not fit their preferred image. As Sayers has incisively described our predicament in the current age, “It is not important that we *are* good as it is that we *appear* good” (p. 28, emphases original).

The silver lining is that young people may retain a sincere faith in God even as they disaffiliate from the church. And when asked, some will continue to assert they are SDAs even after years of non-attendance. Their beliefs remain even though they may not be connected to a body of believers and are not living out those beliefs in our religious communities.

### **Contemporary Discipleship**

In every era the Christian Church has had to develop contemporary principles of discipleship in an attempt to practice them in the most effective way possible. The review of the current literature shows that in order for the church to remain relevant, by speaking

the language of the present age, it has always needed to determine what forms are the most effective without violating biblical principles. The apostle Paul said:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:19-23)

This biblical description encapsulates the challenge facing the Christian Church throughout every age, including ours, to ask continually what contemporary discipleship should look like. In Rom 1:1, as Paul described himself as both an "apostle" and "bondservant," we gain some meaningful insights. Wuest (1973, p. 23) notes that bondservant was unflattering since it represented the "lowest of classes." Its root meaning refers to "one whose will is swallowed up in the will of another." Furthermore, "the union between a bondservant and his master could only be broken through death."

We can gain perspective into the meaning of discipleship by understanding Paul's description. First of all, regardless of the form discipleship takes in the current age, it will include humility and brokenness. In addition, the commitment to the discipleship of Christ will be self-sacrificing. Many times leaders may so desire to see hundreds and thousands of people come to Christ and join the path of discipleship that they may take shortcuts to give the appearance of growth that is not genuine. All must be honest in addition to the methods used for measuring success, which may be largely numeric at times. "God would be better pleased to have six thoroughly converted to the truth than to



have sixty make a profession and yet not be truly converted” (White, 1948a, p. 370). The litmus test is genuine conversion rather than mere profession.

Before his death in 2003, Mike Yaconelli, with over 40 years of youth ministry experience, expressed significant reservations concerning young people and the challenge of long-term discipleship: “Young people flock to Christian concerts, cheer Jesus at large events, and work on service projects. Unfortunately, it is not because of Jesus; it is because they’re young! The most important function of youth ministry is longevity. Long-term discipleship” (2003, p. 18). The full context of this statement does not negate the fact that young people can genuinely love Jesus and serve Him from a spirit-filled perspective, but rather emphasizes the need to take into account the characteristics of natural and youthful exuberance while making adequate provision for their long-term discipleship.

The long-term nature of discipleship will undoubtedly require making the changes necessary to meet the needs of youth and young adults as they mature to ensure they maintain a viable form of discipleship. Because we live in a rapidly changing world, several key factors affect the face of discipleship today.

### Change

If there is a timeless idiom it is that “change is inevitable.” Though most would agree with King Solomon that there is “nothing new under the sun,” none would argue against the need to keep up with the times. In our desire to see youth and young adults embrace the Gospel and a life of genuine biblical discipleship we must do so in a way that speaks to the times. The world has changed dramatically, especially over the last 100

years. Moreover, an expert analyst and researcher of the way culture's ever-evolving impact is having on future generations of church has said, "the pace of change has kicked into overdrive during the last decade or two" (Rabey, 2001, p. 1). That was a decade ago!

Yet people's needs remain similar in spite of all the change taking place. David Neff (2009) emphasizes one necessary perspective to consider he gleaned from an interview with Todd Hunter: "The average person doesn't live out of data and propositions. They live out of their imaginations" (p. 68). Explaining this statement further he says, "If we recast the gospel as something that gives us life, not just a secure death, then discipleship and mission become normative because they become more intuitive" (p. 68).

This is a challenge to our Adventist preference for evangelization. He further explains that although heaven is our destination it is not exclusively our goal. The goal of Christianity is transformation into the likeness of Christ. As the world continues to evolve the need to solidify a *practical* expression of discipleship emerges. Discipleship needs to be about what we do in the here and now and not only in the hereafter. Discipleship must be life transforming and powerful in the daily life of its participants.

The world groans for something practical, something that provides deeper meaning. Ironically, Christianity itself has been affected by recent societal transitions. To illustrate, Drane (2008) recounts how he recently came across groups of people in rural Cambridgeshire (England) who were concerned because the business at the local pubs had plummeted due to the more insular lives of people in the current age. In regards to this surprising reality he writes, "In a circumstance where people have no commitment

even to go and socialize with others at a pub, it is not surprising that religious institutions have suffered more than most” (p. 34).

We cannot deny that such societal shifts need to be accounted for when considering plans for contemporary discipleship. What methodological changes need to be considered? Every generation needs to answer these questions because every generation’s experience is different. Sweet (1999) explains, “Every generation needs a shape that fits its own hands, its own soul. Each generation, every person, needs a different handle from which to receive the living waters of Jesus” (p. 29).

The principles of the Gospel are unchanging yet the methods of transmitting that eternal message must adapt. Daniel Pink (2006) proposes the notion of four successive Ages: Agricultural, Industrial, Information, and Conceptual, and classifies today’s age as Conceptual. In our conceptual age the messengers of the gospel will need to be “story-tellers,” and “ideators.” These are individuals who will be able to convey a message in a dramatic, creative, and illustrative way connecting with people on deeper levels.

### **Advances in Technology**

As technology has advanced so have the ways people interact with each other. Gone are the days of tape recorders and brick-sized cellular phones. Unfortunately, technology has given us the appearance that we are more connected to each other when the reverse is proving true. There are more means and methods of communication but fewer interpersonal connections. The truth is that progress is not all it promised to be. Swenson (2004) says, “If progress is so wonderful, why do we drink and drug to forget

our problems? Why are we divorcing and suing at such rates? Why are people killing themselves—and others—in such numbers” (p. 24)?

Although these advances in technology have not solved our societal problems, developing plans for contemporary discipleship must take into account the new and modified interphases people commonly use.

## **Globalization**

The world has never been smaller. The effects of an event in one part of the globe can be felt significantly elsewhere. Recently volcanic ash in Iceland impeded travel for most of Northern and Central Europe as well as travel to and from the United States. Reporting for the *New York Times*, Mackey (2010) referred to the time frame for the air to clear, “Would you believe, six months? Since the volcano is still spewing ash, no one knows when the skies will be clear enough to fly again.”

The impact of globalization has never been more present. “Never before have we had the resources, technology, and accessibility now available to us to effectively and instantaneously communicate and connect with people all over the world” (Wraight, 2007, p. 42). But as the world becomes smaller, new opportunities have opened up. Some desire the creation of a new level of openness in society. Admittedly the founder of Facebook,” who endured a firestorm of criticism for changes to the company’s privacy policy, proposes increased societal openness as one of his organizational ideals. Speaking of Mark Zuckerberg’s lambasting in the media for the changes to the privacy settings of Facebook, Gould (2010) wrote for *Newsweek*:

In an op-ed in *The Washington Post*, he couched the move in terms of Facebook’s organizing ideals, which include the belief that “if people share more, the world will

become more open and connected. And a world that's more open and connected is a better world.”

Gould (2010) continues, “In his new book, *The Facebook Effect*, David Kirkpatrick expands on Zuckerberg’s ‘radical’ transparency camp,’ noting that the 26-year-old mogul and his followers believe that ‘more transparency should make for a more tolerant society.’” (For additional analysis on globalization and the ministry perspectives it may spawn see Appendix B.) With the age of the internet, a whole new frontier for connecting people has emerged.

### Post Modernism’s Impact

People today have a different paradigm than in previous ages, “a socially constructed way of thinking about and of imagining the world” (Mahan, Warren, & White, 2008, p. 44). The promise of the “modern age” with human answers to all of life’s problems has shown itself to be void. Claiborne (2006) says, “The things that transform us, especially us ‘postmoderns,’ are people and experiences. Political ideologies and *religious doctrines* just aren’t very compelling, even if they’re true” (p. 28, emphasis added).

### **Absolute Truth**

This is not to say that there is no basis for objective truth in presenting the Gospel, for as Hull (2004) states, “False ideas still exist, but they can be captured and disarmed” (p. 115). The challenge is how to find the interphase between the present generation and the Gospel story. Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias (2002), in describing the millennial generation has said:

If there's one thing I would say, it is that we have lost our ability to reason. The power of critical thinking has gone from induction to deduction and very few are able to think clearly anymore. I have often said the challenge of the truth speaker today is this: How do you reach a generation that listens with its eyes and thinks with its feelings?

The “truth speaker,” as Zacharias calls it, would describe all of those who proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The challenges are incredible! The current generation and its embrace of relativism while rejecting absolute truth appears to have built an insurmountable wall.

The challenge we face today in presenting the Gospel is enormous. Drane (2008), in describing this challenge and the implications for organized religion, says:

Future generations of disciples will be even less interested in denominations—not because they reject them, but because they regard all of them as partial insights into a message and way of being that is larger than any one of them by itself. (p. 52)

No doubt there is much to be done in engaging our relativistic society and the spillover effects the church will continually face in resistance to denominationalism. (For additional analysis on the concept of complexity and the deterioration of values in the present age and its resultant effect on discipleship see Appendix B.)

### **Successful Elements of Relating With Non-Believers**

One of the most powerful connections to be made today with non-believers is to develop genuine friendships with them. People today continue to feel an inexplicable emptiness. “We have unprecedented personal freedom, but our freedom is accompanied by a haunting sense of being lost” (Sayers, 2010, p. 6). Drane (2008) echoes a similar thought, “. . . many people find themselves economically well off, but trapped in a living hell of personal insecurity” (p. 22). More *freedom* and better *economic standing* has not

translated into a greater sense of wellbeing. There seems to be a haunting feeling that all is not what it appears and society is on a thin sheet of ice. Drane (2008) elaborates:

Our culture has undergone a significant loss of confidence in itself—not least because the promise of world peace held out at the beginning of the twentieth century turned out to be hollow, and as time passed every horror surpassed the previous ones for brutality and inhumanity. (p. 22)

In the early 1990s theologian Thomas Oden saw the crisis to the philosophy of modernity mounting when he wrote:

Not some theory but actual modern history is what is killing the ideology of modernity. . . . While modernity continues blandly to teach us that we are moving ever upward and onward, the actual history of late modernity is increasingly brutal, barbarian, and malignant. (1990, p. 51)

In this environment people may be more ready than ever to establish genuine bonds of friendship and mutual support.

### **Organic Expressions**

Many have looked to the *emerging church movement* as a go-between for Christianity in this age of skepticism because its organic and nontraditional feel may have some elements that are enticing to secular post-moderns. A specific definition for the emerging church has been hotly debated:

The use of the term [emerging church] tends to provoke very different reactions from Christian commentators and scholars, . . . it is a somewhat slippery term that clearly means different things to different people, and in different cultural contexts. (Drane, 2008, p. 47)

However, insights from the emerging church have something to offer as it observes the ironies between how society behaves and how it responds to what traditional Christianity has to offer.

For example, in his book, *The Gospel According to Starbucks*, Sweet compares people who are lining up to overpay for coffee with those who are not lining up to enter our churches. One of Sweet's (2007) more telling observations is how "Organized religion has been assuming that because it has a better product—namely, God—that it simply needs to open the doors and customers will line up. That assumption no longer holds" (p. 5). Contemporary discipleship can use such insights and may glean ideas from secular forms.

There are of course those who would warn of the dangers of the emerging church movement. Brewin (2004) speaks of the "emerging" challenges and cautions that precipitating a misdirected revolution may only provide tactical changes, so "rather than trying to import culture into church and make it 'cool', we need instead to become 'wombs of the divine' and completely rebirth the Church into a host culture" (p. 70).

Another cautionary voice is showcased by Neff (2009) in his *Christianity Today* interview with Todd Hunter, an adjunct professor of evangelism and postmodern ministry at Fuller Seminary. He explains the challenge of the emerging church movement:

First, the emergents are so sensitive to issues of community, relationship, egalitarianism, and being non-utilitarian in their relationships, that evangelism has simply become a synonym for manipulation—a foul ball, relationally. If you and I were work colleagues and I built a relationship in which I could influence your journey toward Christ, that would be considered wrong in these circles. I cannot be friends with you if I intend to lead you to Christ. (p. 66)

Herein may lie one of the challenges of fully embracing any emergent quality in our quest for a contemporary discipleship. If our proclamation of the Gospel is no longer tenable because of fear of offending people we will need to consider why Jesus chose the "foolishness of preaching" (1 Cor 1:18) in the first place.



Hull (2004) summarized an encounter with a postmodern unbeliever on an airplane to describe this very real tension of living out discipleship within this age:

When the person seated next to me on the airplane found out I was in the ‘God business,’ she said what so many would like to but rarely do, ‘You’re not going to try to convert me, are you?’ I pondered what to say, and then it came to me, ‘I wouldn’t be much of a Christian if I didn’t try to convert you.’ I told her that I was held responsible by God to tell others, to witness to my experience with God (Acts 1:8). (p. 112)

This interaction undoubtedly shows the tension faced today by some of the methodological forms of the past and the best methods for reaching the current age. There certainly needs to be a balanced approach so our efforts are not rebuffed in a wholesale manner, but retain a fidelity to the biblical imperative of proclamation. (For additional analysis on what “Learning to Learn” might look like see Appendix B.)

### Contextualizing the Gospel

There is a great body of current literature that relates to the importance of contextualizing the Gospel. Taking the age-old message we have received and placing it in ready and recognizable receptacles is necessary for contemporary discipleship to occur. Many have questioned the ability of newer generations of disciples to receive the blessings and traditions of generations that have gone before them while creating new and fresh traditions of their own. Quicke (2009) speaks to the challenge of new spiritual forms in old formulae by applying the principle and metaphor taught by Jesus in Mark when the Pharisees asked why the disciples of Jesus did not fast and He told them that “no one puts new wine into old wineskins” (Mark 2:22) (p. 169). In much the same way there are ever fresh spiritual experiences that may challenge old forms, and “any attempt

to fit such radical spiritual life into old methods, old formulae, and old forms of spirituality, is as absurd as pouring new wine into ancient wineskins” (p. 170).

### **New Wineskins**

The concept that emerges in the literature specifically highlights the quest to formulate new and meaningful methods for experiencing and transmitting the message of the Gospel. “Each generation, therefore, faces possibilities of both the zest of fresh theological insights, as well as the danger of old wineskins—old methods, formulae, and forms of spirituality that cannot contain this ever fresh ‘spiritual and relational vitality’ ” (Quicke, 2009, p. 170). This does not mean we cannot learn and be guided by the lessons of the past. On the contrary, the lessons of the past are the framework for moving into the future. Some have likened progress of this sort to rowing a boat where a person can progress only while facing the rear.

Many deep and meaningful questions are needed in order to chart this course.

Drane (2008) proposes some engaging questions:

How might we follow Jesus faithfully in today’s post-modern culture? What might new wineskins for new circumstance look like? How can Gospel and Culture be brought into a creative dialogue that will affirm and challenge both of those conversation partners? (p. 48)

The Gospel must inhabit the culture for it is part of the very nature of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This principle cannot be discarded. Even though many today are fearful of change because they fear that the foundations of faith are being trifled with, true questioning for meaning and relevance need not intimidate the church.

## **Embedding in the Culture**

Sometimes discussions of contextualization create the fear that the church will move exclusively toward more liberal expressions of worship. However, “If the Gospel is to be embedded in the culture, then we need to recognize that while there are certain common threads, culture itself is to be found in many different shapes today, including a reinvigorated form of traditionalism” (Drane, 2008, p. 48). This very important truism means there will be a need for all kinds of churches and discipleship initiatives if Gospel contextualization is to occur!

Pop culture, while having a significant negative impact on society and its values, can also be seen as a necessary knowledge base whereby one can find bridges to the hearts and minds of non-Christians. Rabey (2001), who does things outside the box, describes the attempt of one cutting-edge ministry in Colorado to connect with pop culture: “They prefer to see pop culture as both a barometer and influencer of mainstream tastes and beliefs. Instead of seeking to silence or suppress it, they seek to understand it and utilize it in their ministries” (p. 145). It would be easier to try covering the sun with ones hand than suppressing pop culture. A person may as well move to a mountaintop and become a monk to try and escape its influence. The words of Paul are key here, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom 12:2).

Paul in essence is piggybacking on the principle laid out by Jesus when He said:

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. (John 17:15)

Both of these passages speak of the reality that the disciple of Jesus Christ is not to escape or run from the present age but rather to remain sheltered in the protection afforded him by God while impacting the world for good. It is impossible to drown out the noise of pop culture, but discipleship involves living amongst and above while transforming it with the pervasive and powerful influence of God and His Spirit.

Martyn Percy (2005) has correctly said, “The lesson from Pentecost is that theology (or Christianity) is always spoken in tongues, so that each can understand their own language” (p. 13).

### Common Methodologies

#### **Fortress Model**

The current literature reveals two common categories of methodology in the evangelization and retention of youth. One is typically called the *fortress* model. There are several places where this classification is found but for the purposes of this study Jon Pauline’s (2008) description will suffice, “A fortress city has walls around it to protect those who are inside from the dangers outside” (p. 85). This model finds expression in the words of Jesus when He says, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matt 5:14). It is characterized by an emphasis in remaining separate from the world and creating avenues, agencies, and societies that almost form a parallel culture. The purpose is to gather around an environment that has been specifically created and engineered so as to provide as *safe* a place as possible where youth and young adults can grow in discipleship with a significant amount of sheltering to protect them from the trials and temptations of the outside world.

This model has both benefits and limitations. On the one hand, the belief underlying the concept is that the youth are safe inside the fortress away from the evils of the world and every once in a while a brave search party is sent out to capture some non-believers and drag them back into the fortress. This model may very well describe our traditional churches. In fact, most of our ecclesiology lends itself to this model because it is easier and safer to organize and maintain. Drane (2008) provides an enlightening description of one source of common to this ecclesiology:

Whenever we define the Church from within our inherited ecclesiologies, we will always get a Christendom-shaped Church, because these traditional patterns are themselves a manifestation of Constantinianism, and in many cases their structures are all but identical to the governance of the Roman empire. (p. 51)

So what do the ecclesiological models of the fortress methodology look like?

Typically these structures remain separate from the world, like Enoch of old, because they fear that they would be affected by its infidelity and be unable to maintain a holy reverence for God. Instead, they hope to establish a beacon of light or a lighthouse wherever needed so that the light that shines far and wide will bring people to them.

Many traditional churches that use this model make claims to originality. Yet because of the challenges the church faces in contextualizing the Gospel, Anderson (2001) wonders, “Which century is normative for our theology?” (p. 104). Which century could give us our most unadulterated ecclesiology? Anderson further argues that no century, not even the first, should be normative for our theology. He insists instead on an “eschatological preference” that he proposes will be found in “a biblical and theological paradigm for ministry based on the liberating praxis of the Holy Spirit” (p. 112). Even in

the fortress model of evangelization and youth retention there needs to be a fluidity that allows a unique and purposeful expression of the Holy Spirit.

### **Salt of the Earth Model**

The other model is often called the *salt of the earth* model and finds expression in the words of Jesus, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matt 5:13). This model of ministry proposes that the Gospel is to be spread in and among the culture if it is to have a pervasive influence on it, for everyone knows when something contains salt. “It is a quiet ministry, an infiltration ministry. It changes the world one bite at a time” (Pauline, 2008, p. 85). This model is concerned more with engaging the contemporary culture, and moving out from behind cloistered environments and secluded areas. Although meeting people where they are and challenging them with the message of the Gospel is the ideal, many times this is not achieved. Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) describes the peril of an ineffective “salt of the earth” embodiment: “It is easy to embrace a costless form of Christianity in America today, and we have probably contributed to that by giving people a superficial understanding of the gospel, and focusing only on their decision to convert” (p. 70).

One limitation of this model is that in some forms it has degenerated into “attraction by entertainment.” A group of co-authors put it like this: “youth ministry at times appears more beholden to the techniques and assumptions of marketers and entertainers than to the gospel” (Mahan, Warren, & White, 2006, p. 39). The danger is that unbelievers will receive an ineffectual form of discipleship, which is no discipleship

at all. As a result of employing dubious methods, the focus on evangelizing and retaining youth may be lost.

The strength of the salt of the earth model is its fearlessness in engaging the culture. Most of the current literature implores truth speakers to begin to engage the imagination of the youth and plant the seeds of the Gospel's power in these ways with great reward. However, it is ironic that "the persons today most concerned with influencing the imagination of youth are not religious persons but the marketing specialists aware of how a properly stirred imagination can mean big sales" (Mahan, Warren, & White, 2008, p. 43). Nevertheless, the inverse must also be true: the stirring of youth's imaginations for the truest goals of the Gospel can mean big strides in reproducible biblical discipleship.

### **Adventism's Unique and Relevant Calling**

In the quest to correctly understand the factors influencing the evangelization and retention of youth in the conceptual age, reflection on the purpose of the SDA Church is essential. The founders of this movement sacrificed their entire lives because of the powerful conviction that God had selected them for a divine calling and purpose for their time. Tragically the passion and fire within the church is abating in North America and the developed world. It too appears to be succumbing to directionless relativism and institutional preservation. I have reflected many times how the church seems to be *languishing in Laodicea*. Yet there is hope in the writings of another author. Ellen White (1976) has said, "Before the final visitation of God's judgments upon the earth there will

be among the people of the Lord such a revival of primitive godliness as has not been witnessed since apostolic times” (p. 33).

The message of the Gospel has fallen upon hard times and the SDA Church in North America has not been immune to the increase in secularization, syncretism, and relativism. Furthermore, the *aging* of the church is alarming. Sahlin and Richardson (2008) have noted “The median age for Seventh-day Adventists in North America is 51 . . . this compares to a median age of 36 in the United States and 35 in Canada. There is a significant trend toward the ‘graying of Adventism’ in North America” (p. 5). An aging church is a dying church. Can there be any more timely words for today than Ellen White’s (1915) observation?

In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history. (p. 196)

#### Contemporary Voices in Adventism

Some of the literature among contemporary SDA writers has given a unique perspective, not only in facing the present challenges, but also in making sure the mission of the SDA Church is contextualized. Folkenberg (2009) wrote of two dangers: “complacency and worldly mindedness on the one hand and compromise and syncretism on the other, are the twin spiritual viruses that threaten our church today” (p. 124). He warns, “If we forget our mission, we will soon just sit in the crowded pew of ‘acceptable, respectable’ Christianity,” adding that “We cannot and must not turn from our destiny as a movement. We must proclaim all three angels’ messages boldly and with the deep and abiding faith that we are not alone” (pp. 72-73).



On the journey towards discovering and ensuring an effective methodology for evangelizing and retaining youth the SDA Church must not lose sight of its mission. A methodology is needed that embraces new forms of connecting with the conceptual age yet enables the church to remain faithful to its calling as a movement. (For additional analysis of symptoms of Laodicea See Appendix B.)

### **Historical Journey of Adventism**

George Knight has written convincingly about the need to remain crystal clear as to the church's existence and the dangers of not doing so.

Christian history is littered with religious bodies who have forgotten where they have come from, and as a result, have no direction for the future . . . our church has its own stones of remembrance. We neglect them at our peril. (2008b, p. 9)

In describing the history of the growth of the SDA Church from obscurity, Knight (2008b) quotes Adventist historian Clyde Hewitt, “the tiniest of the Millerite offshoot groups was the one which would become the largest” (p. 363). He goes on to chronicle the journey from relative obscurity to prominence amongst its former peers.

Knight (2008b) identifies three diverse strands of Adventism that evolved between 1844 and 1848. From these three strands of Millerism six denominations emerged: The American Evangelical Conference, the Advent Christians, the Church of God, the Life and Advent Union, the Church of God [Seventh Day], and the SDA Church. By 1860 the government census identified 54,000 believers of whom about 3,000 observed the seventh day. Over the next 30 years a dramatic change occurred, “the once minute SDAs had by then achieved predominance, with 28,991 members” (pp. 362-363).

Following close behind were the Advent Christians with 25,816 members. However, the following is crucial to this discussion: two of the six denominations had ceased to exist within the next hundred years! By that time the SDA Church had more than one million members in the United States and over 15 million worldwide! The Advent Christians reported 25, 277 in the U.S. while virtually none abroad. The remaining Adventist denominations had 3,860 and 9,700 members respectively. The dramatic history of the SDA Church has not only been detailed by some of its own writers, but even by those outside of it. Knight (2008b) quotes Clyde Hewitt who seeks to explain the church's growth in contradistinction to the lack of growth sustained by his own denomination:

The distinctive beliefs and practices of the [SDA] denomination, while causing it to be viewed with suspicion by many traditional Christian believers, have seemingly given its faithful members a resoluteness of individual and group character that goes far to explain their success. (p. 366)

Knight has also written words that direct this study appropriately in his provocative book, *The Apocalyptic Vision, and the Neutering of Adventism*: “In the face of what seems to be an ever-delaying Second Advent, many Adventists, especially *talented young ones*, are searching for a relevant, meaningful message for the new century” (2008a, p. 104, emphasis added).

### **A Meaningful Eschatology**

Referring to the challenges facing Christianity in the current age, Drane, one of the most prominent theologians today, made the following significant statement:

Hope is at the heart of the Gospel, and yet no Christian tradition seems to have any sort of serviceable eschatology for the twenty-first-century world in which we live. . . . The opinions on this subject that originated in the millenarian speculations of the

late nineteenth and early twentieth century's are completely irrelevant to the concerns of the wider population. . . . What would a meaningful twenty-first-century eschatology consist of? (2008, p. 27)

I would assert that the SDA Church with its distinctive message and mission are uniquely able to meet this eschatological vacuum. Drane's contention that one of the severely limiting factors of Christianity today in connecting with the conceptual age is a meaningful eschatology is a call to speak up: the church's silence is deafening.

### **Reviving the Remnant**

The concept of the *remnant* has fallen on hard times. The resistance of postmoderns to a metanarrative, "an abstract idea that is thought to be a comprehensive explanation of historical experience or knowledge" (Wikipedia, 2010b), is clear. Yet the very same obstacles that apparently impede the church's ability to present a holistic message may be the key to its very reception. Postmoderns are *inclusivistic* by definition. Nothing is off limits and therefore the church's proclamation may find an attentive ear if genuine and authentic friendships are formed.

In the recent book, *Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiological Perspective*, general editor and contributor Angel M. Rodriguez (2009) has written, "Adventist appropriation of the concept of the end-time remnant is grounded on the distinctive characteristics of the remnant people found in Revelation" (pp. 209-210). Rodriguez continues, "This remnant is not exclusive in nature but open to all. It is fundamentally controlled by a sense of mission that should not allow for exclusiveness" (p. 216). Many in recent times have cringed and shied away from expressing the remnant view because they fear being perceived as elitist, cultic, or sectarian. Nor can the reality

be ignored that some have been grossly irresponsible and have done serious damage by unchristian, pharisaical attitudes in their interactions with Christians of other faiths as well as non-believers in presenting this concept. They would do well to re-read what Ellen White (1946) has said, “No one has yet received the mark of the beast. The testing time has not yet come. There are true Christians in every church” (p. 235). But the biblical foundations for a theology of the remnant are compelling.

Is it possible that a renewal in a balanced, holistic, and humble understanding of the remnant can be a tool in helping youth discover an incredibly unique and compelling identity and calling as disciples at this end time? Adventism believes there is a larger expression of God’s church greater than the remnant. They see part of their mission as calling out God’s church from the exile they are in from Babylon and that a significant part of their mission is to restore fundamental biblical truths before Christ’s coming. In his conclusion, Rodriguez (2009) presents a summary to help synthesize and re-frame the need for a comprehensive and contemporary understanding of the remnant:

There is a ‘universal church’ . . . the ‘other sheep that are not of this sheep pen [John 10:16]. . . . The end-time remnant people are the visible expression of the church of Christ, possessing certain specific characteristics and a *particular mission*. . . . Through them God is restoring fundamental biblical truths [playing] a significant role in the final confrontation. . . . In the fulfillment of their mission, the remnant will be used by the Lord to pull the universal church out of its invisibility in preparation for the coming of the Lord in glory. (p. 226, emphasis added)

The church appears poised for dual revivals: on the one hand, a revival of genuine biblical discipleship, and, on the other hand, a rediscovery among youth and young adults of the powerful identity that is cemented by Adventism’s unique mission and calling. The literature shows a desire by youth and young adults to be a part of something profoundly meaningful. A methodology that incorporates the truest tenets of biblical discipleship as

well as initiatives seeking to relate meaningfully with God's special end-time mission has never been more necessary.

### **Current Initiatives and Resources**

Shane Claiborne is a compelling figure on the new evangelical landscape. His provocative writing and lifestyle will challenge anyone who is serious about seeking a contemporary embodiment of biblical discipleship. Although I may not agree with his ideological statements, I do believe we can learn much from him and those who together with him are not willing to settle for the *status quo* and have become our modern day *radicals*. He speaks about the new generation of believers that is rising up all around. "There is a new movement bubbling up that goes beyond cynicism and celebrates a new way of living, a generation that stops complaining about the church it sees and becomes the church it dreams of" (Claiborne, 2006, p. 24).

This reality is more than merely a *silver lining* in all the difficulties we face in connecting with the conceptual age. There seems to be a reductionism that is moving youth towards a genuine expression of faith apart from *forms* that may seem to have lost their meaning; in their place new forms are arising. Young people are looking to be a part of the solution for the church's stagnation—Good News indeed. Many current initiatives and resources are seeking to provide youth and young adults with multiple opportunities for service and spiritual growth. They are specifically geared for creating encounters for the youth of the church to make a lasting commitment to Jesus Christ and become active participants in a local congregation into adulthood and beyond. Some of these will be presented in the following pages.

## Meeting Youth Where They Are

One of the keys to youth and young adult evangelization is to be in the correct location. Wright, president of the international Youth for Christ (YFC) organization, has correctly said “a core ministry strategy YFC has always employed [is to] go where the young people are” (2007, p. 38). It is essential to move out and engage people and not simply wait to see if they walk through our doors.

### **3Story Evangelism**

3Story Evangelism Training Curriculum Kit: Preparing Teenagers for a Lifestyle of Evangelism, entitled 3Story Evangelism to describe its main strategy, claims to be different from a “hit and run” methodology (Youth Specialties, 2010a). It was created by Dave Rahn, vice president and chief ministry officer for YFC (USA), and YFC (2007). This kit appears to be a comprehensive and sound discipleship resource. YFC boasts more than 2,100 community-based relational outreach ministries among teenagers, some of which use this resource.

The resource comes with a two-disc curriculum course emphasizing a culturally relevant, biblically based, form of discipleship for youth that emphasizes being real with their peers. It is comprised of eight 50 minute training sessions that help students to discover their stories and be able to tie them to God’s story, while helping their friends discover their own stories. The resource also comes with five participant guides. The primary strategy focuses on building natural bridges between youth and their peers. It includes specific training on how to listen effectively and then be able to share one’s

personal testimony in a way that connects their own story with God's story and with their friends' story (Youth Specialties, 2010a). This resource and others can be found at <http://www.youthspecialties.com>.

### **Way of the Master**

Former teen actor Kirk Cameron and Ray Comfort are the *face* of an initiative by a non-denominational organization, Living Waters. It is dedicated to helping young people share their faith by engaging anyone on the street and using *incisive questioning*. The basic training resource is an eight session DVD course with actual footage of on-the-street encounters with people. They claim their strategies bypass the typical intellectual arguments against Christianity and directly engage people's conscience (Comfort & Cameron, 2005). Their website ([www.wayofthemaster.com](http://www.wayofthemaster.com)) is comprehensive and well resourced. In spite of several theological differences with Adventists, there is merit in learning from their candid and nonthreatening approach. Adventists could adapt several of these strategies and contextualize them.

This non-offensive approach is directly engaging. The on-the-street interviews shown on their website show interesting progressions from an initial curiosity of being approached by a stranger asking questions with a video camera to emotionally engaging the probing questions.

### **General Youth Conference**

The General Youth Conference (GYC) is an unofficial SDA organization that provides a conservative alternative to the generally more contemporary programming of the North American Division Youth Department. Their primary initiative has been an

annual conference held in different parts of the country since 2002, which includes training and equipping seminars for witnessing and general, support. The mission statement on their website states,

There exists, today, an army of dedicated young people within the Seventh-day Adventist church who yearn to demonstrate Nehemiah's leadership, Daniel's integrity, Mary's humility, Paul's passion for evangelism, and Christ's love for God and humanity. It is the goal of GYC and its members to seek and galvanize such young people. We aim to mobilize existing youth and young adult ministries that are fully committed to the distinctive message and mission of the Adventist church towards the proclamation of the Three Angels' Messages. (GYC, n.d.)

This particular initiative points to a growing divide in the SDA Church among those who see the church as losing its prophetic calling and succumbing to liberal influences and those who believe the Gospel as well as the Adventist mission need to be contextualized for the conceptual age. The purpose of this review is not to choose sides, but rather to highlight one model that is clearly leaning towards traditionalism and conservatism.

### **GODencounters**

GODencounter—founded by A. Allan Martin, associate professor of Discipleship and Family Ministry at the SDA Theological Seminary—is an initiative that creates spiritual encounters for youth. The stated desires leadership models are to “live lives of Worship; be agents of the Gospel; Grace-fully express compassion; Pray without ceasing; embrace Sabbath as soul CPR; Morph into His likeness; and celebrate in Jubilee” (Martin, Bailey, & Lamountain, 2009, p. 8). This retreat is held annually around the county and the vast leadership teams, comprised of youth pastors as well as youth workers, take seriously their preparation by having 40 days of prayer before each retreat.



The programming is supremely intentional in all phases of the retreat when it comes to the preaching, praise, and prayer times—all the while directing participants to a genuine and creative experience.

Cofounder Jeff Gang is quoted as saying, “[GODencounters is] not an act or a program but an everyday, every-moment way of living” (Martin et al., 2009, p. 8). The testimonies of those who have attended the retreats speak convincingly of coming away with a powerful spiritual renewal. This initiative has had success in providing an alternative to predominant rational expressions of Adventism. Martin is unequivocal when he says, “The core of GODencounters is what we’ve called a *sacred discontent*—that we experience the holy, living God, and come away unable to be satisfied with what was good enough’ before” (p. 12, emphasis original). Their website, [www.godencounters.org](http://www.godencounters.org) has many resources and methods of connecting with other youth for mutual support, encouragement and learning.

## **Dare 2 Share**

*Dare 2 Share*, by Greg Stier (2006), in partnership with Focus on the Family, is touted as “a field guide to sharing your faith.” Stier divides the book into three parts. The first part is dedicated to preliminary questions and concepts needing attention before venturing out into witnessing. The second part of the book elaborates more fully the keys to understanding how to best present the Gospel in nonthreatening ways as well as through the necessary bridge of authentic relationships. Stier is careful to both present a theological foundation for witnessing as well as fundamental concepts of human interaction that are beneficial. Stier (2006) gives several examples of incisive questions

that may generate positive discussion such as: “What is most important to you in life? How would you rate your interest in spiritual things on a scale from 1 to 10? Why?” (p. 62). The final and third part of the book lists 14 types of individuals one might encounter and how best to witness to them. The spectrum ranges from Agnostics to Wiccans. I think this is an exceptional resource in helping youth consider what a step-by-step approach to witnessing may look like.

### **Sharing Jesus**

Doug Fields and Brett Eastman (2005) have partnered together and brought this resource, *Experiencing Christ Together: Sharing Jesus*, under the Youth Specialties umbrella. It includes six Small Groups sessions on evangelism. The Youth Specialties (2010b) website describes the resource by saying,

Evangelism can be a scary, strange, difficult challenge for students. *Sharing Jesus* gives them the tools and attitude they need to share the love of Christ with their friends, family, and the world. Six sessions help students understand how Jesus interacted with people, why evangelism is important, and how to make it a part of their daily experience with Jesus.

Each lesson provides youth with an opportunity to covenant, do reflective writing while answering questions, journal, and take decided steps towards beginning to witness. (For Additional Resources See Appendix B.)

### **Conclusions**

Several key factors that have emerged from this review of literature undoubtedly could affect the methodologies of the evangelization and retention of youth. Some of these are societal and others are cultural. In the quest for presenting and engaging non-believers with the principles of biblical discipleship the expressions of these principles

must be examined for their value in contextualizing the Gospel for today. The message proclaimed must be in a language and form which can be effective and easily understood.

The challenge of reaching postmoderns is great. Their resistance to any metanarrative is clear. Yet even the very nature of postmodernism's inclusiveness may provide a window in presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The conceptual age has ushered in new opportunities for reshaping the form in which the Gospel can be presented. Creative storytelling and genuine authentic friendships surface as two of the keys for evangelizing and retaining youth and young adults.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE JESUS LOVES JEANS YOUTH

#### DISCIPLESHIP INITIATIVE

##### **Introduction**

One of the key ideas present in the previous chapter and the current literature is the desire of young people to be involved and belong before they make a commitment to the church or believe. The JLJ Initiative, as will be seen throughout this chapter, is inclusive in nature; it helps young people to have Jesus as their priority in the life. The result is not expressed in young people proselytizing their friends, but rather sharing their genuine and authentic experience with Jesus. One of the elements of the initiative is that participation is not the exclusive domain of those who are members and baptized. Although up until now this has been a passive focus, there is a desire to be more intentional about specifically involving those who are not yet baptized in the technological and creative elements of the initiative allowing them to belong before they believe. Throughout this chapter the reader will learn the origin of the JLJ concept as well as its current evolution. What will be seen in the following pages are the main elements of JLJ and how they are implemented.

Some things happen on purpose, others apparently by accident. So when I found myself at an International House of Pancakes in South West Houston with two other

young area pastors we started to wonder what God might be up to. Years before I had pastored in Miami, Florida surrounded by a deep group of talented youth pastors and nothing significant seemed to come of my time there. As I dialogued with Josue Murillo, and Jose Antonio Pagán, my newfound partners in ministry in Houston, we began to share what has been described as a “sacred discontent” (Martin, Warren, & White, 2009, p. 12). We all discovered a shared passion for youth ministry and evangelism and the reality that neither was happening with any degree of success in our sphere of influence, especially in conjunction one with the other. We decided to pursue an initiative emboldened by the conviction that it should be.

We covenanted to refuse to allow our time together to be in vain. We dreamed of a conference where youth and young adults would come for inspiration, community, worship, and training in biblical discipleship. We were all tired of seeing youth playing church and those who refused to play church walking out the door, most never to be seen from again. The vision of this youth conference would be to help youth break out of the status quo and begin to live out the Great Commission and see their friends won to Christ.

### **Jesus Loves Jeans Initiative**

#### History

Pastor José A. Pagán was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico June 2, 1971. He was the first to become an Adventist in his family and was baptized at the age of eight at the Magnolia, Bayamón Church in Puerto Rico. He followed the call to become a pastor and has served since 1991 in Puerto Rico, Forest City Spanish, and Houston, in various

ministerial positions, and now serves as the Pastoral Liason for the Southwestern Union at Southwestern Adventist University. He was ordained to the Gospel ministry in July 2002. In 1995, while on a flight, Pagán (as he is affectionately called) picked up a magazine to pass the time. His eyes fell upon an article entitled, “Jeans Uniformed the World.” Pagán has an incredible gift to see what others do not, and because he thinks in pictures, images, and metaphors, a youth week of prayer concept was immediately born.

He made the connection that every young person owns at least one pair of *jeans*, and as such jeans were a type of uniform for youth. If youth could come to discover that Jesus actually loves the jeans young people wear, then maybe both youth and older generations of church leaders could transcend to the deeper reality that Jesus loves young people. Essentially the concept was not about making the church more *worldly* by encouraging youth to come dressed down for church, but rather to make a meaningful connection between the different styles of jeans and powerful biblical stories of grace!

Jeans come in many different styles. Some jeans are faded, while others are torn. Some jeans are expensive designer jeans and some are courageously white while others are very short and indecent, known as Daisy Duke jeans. The term Daisy Dukes is a cultural term born in the television show, “The Dukes of Hazzard” and is used to describe actress Catherine Bach’s “wearing [of] tight and short jean shorts, which later became colloquially known as ‘Daisy Dukes’ ” (Wikipedia, 2010a).

The vision God gave Pagán was in connecting these styles with biblical stories in which Jesus encountered these jeans and changed lives forever. The worn-out jeans can be seen in the Gospel story of blind Bartimeaus and the torn jeans in the Gospel story of the Demoniac. The expensive designer jeans describes Jesus’ encounter with the rich

young ruler and the *white* jeans exemplifies the life of Jesus himself who lived a life wearing white jeans without ever getting them dirtied. The Daisy Duke jeans portray the life of the woman caught in adultery. The final connection Pagán made was presenting an *eternal jean*—the last pair of jeans anyone would ever need and connecting it to the biblical story of the wedding feast.

**JLJ Title in Spanish: *Jesús Ama Los Maones Remix***

The word *maones* is a regional word used in Puerto Rico to describe jeans. The youth week of prayer with this title was immensely successful both at the Adventist University in Puerto Rico where Pagán became the first student in its history to lead out in the student week of prayer there and in many parts of Puerto Rico as well as in Colombia, South America.

Because of the success God had provided in the past with this concept, both Murillo and I were open to adopting it as the overall youth discipleship initiative title. We adapted the title to simply Jesus Loves Jeans, as it could be easily understood in English and Spanish. Our *remix* of the concept would no longer be simply a week of prayer, but an evangelistic tool. God began to flood us with ideas for presenting and engaging the youth together with tools and resources to empower the youth for sharing their faith with their friends. Eims (1978) has rightly said the ideal of discipleship is to, “take [a] person from the time of his conversion and help him become a solid, dedicated, committed, fruitful, mature disciple who could in time repeat that process in the life of another” (p. 18). The inspiration for the resources we created came from our own ministerial experiences with bible study materials as well as our individual evangelistic experience.

## The Four Foundations of Jesus Loves Jeans

The JLJ vision evolved into a focused initiative with four simple foundations. First we began to identify the elements in our ministries that had been successful. We recognized that going through the process of outlining these principles was important because, up until now, most of us had experienced varied levels of God-given success by ministering intuitively. Doers typically are not necessarily the best at teaching others to do what they do. Furthermore, coaches in almost any sphere are not necessarily the best performers although they are able to identify key principles and relate them to their pupils. So, while the following principles are not *earth shattering*, they do represent an important sequence in implementing the aims of youth discipleship, even though the sequence may not occur in a strictly linear fashion.

### **Prayer**

The conviction that prayer must undergird every evangelistic effort is the first foundation of JLJ. Youth are taught in the convention and conference that in order to see their friends won to Christ they need to humble themselves and see the battle over the enemy through the spiritual weapon of prayer. The Bible says, “If My people who are called by My name will *humble* themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land” (2 Chr 7:14, emphasis added). JLJ includes several types of prayer:

1. Instant prayer invites the person to pray right then and there rather than wait for later. How many times have people asked for prayer and the good intention of doing so has been forgotten? Instant prayer does not wait.



2. Drive-by prayer means to pray for someone as you pass by them even without their knowledge.

3. Pray a P.R.A.I.S.E. prayer can be used to challenge people to pray for an hour. Although its author is unknown (to me anyway), many have used this acronym as a model prayer by designating ten minute segments for each letter.

P—Praise: Spend 10 minutes praising God.

R—Repent: Spend 10 minutes repenting of known sin.

A—Ask: Spend 10 minutes asking God for your needs.

I—Intercede: Spend 10 minutes interceding for friends and loved ones.

S—Silence: Spend 10 minutes in silence listening to God.

E—Expectancy: Spend 10 minutes claiming Bible promises with faith and expectation.

For more ideas for different kinds of prayer helps see “Creative Prayer Center for Youth Ministry” (Brian, 2008). Also other resources are available at [www.rethinkingyouthministry.com](http://www.rethinkingyouthministry.com). For a hand out of the P.R.A.I.S.E. prayer see Appendix C.

## **Friendship**

Genuine friendships are the most logical bridges to reaching people for Christ that is why JLJ teaches youth the importance of being a genuine friend. Pagán likes to say that a true and genuine friend is one who is concerned with your salvation. Youth are already sharing the Gospel with their friends on a daily basis, whether it is the Gospel of their latest gadget or cell phone plan. After all, there are many forms of Good News that

people share. There are special benefits from the Gospel message that comes from a close friend. The trust and rapport that already exists in the relationship can be used for good as well as for evil. McDowell (2009) quotes Kinnaman, author of *UNchristian*, “Christians must build meaningful, genuine relationships with non-Christians and live out their faith consistently” (p. 22). Because peer pressure is one of the most difficult challenges faced by young people during adolescence, there is an obvious benefit in positive peer pressure in which youth support each other in positive choices rather than negative ones.

### **Proclamation**

Once a young person discovers biblical discipleship is an imperative, they have to come to terms with *how* to share the Gospel. At this point most people start a conversation about spiritual gifts. The discussion of spiritual gifts is an important one, but it is sometimes used as an excuse to avoid having to share anything at all. I agree with Ellen White (1892) when she says,

No sooner does one come to Christ than there is born in his heart a desire to make known to others what a precious friend he has found in Jesus; the saving and sanctifying truth *cannot be shut up* in his heart. (p. 78, emphasis added)

Young people are already sharing their opinions, thoughts, and convictions with their peers, and it stands to reason that the most important conviction of all should be a part of this reality. However, it is necessary to challenge the current assumptions and culturally accepted relativism most of our youth have embraced which can be achieved by the use of appropriate apologetic discussion. Loving and direct questioning is a part of the process, which I will go into more detail later. Most young people have been told that some of their opinions are wrong, but rarely have their worldviews been intelligently

questioned in an environment of mutual respect. Mutual respect is important so young people do not immediately tune out from the predictable *talking head* they have become accustomed to already dismissing. This is one of the essential keys that help young people share the Gospel, a necessary step in their development of healthy biblical discipleship.

### **Challenge**

One of the hallmarks of JLJ is its emphasis on helping youth lead their friends to make a decision for Jesus Christ. There seems to be a hesitancy surrounding appeals for decision because they are thought to make people uncomfortable or come across as authoritarian or judgmental. It is ironic that Christianity seems to be neutered in this regard, especially when one considers the immense societal pressures that abound in the current culture. The media and pop culture have no problem telling society what it should drink, wear, drive, or be. The disciple however has an even greater reason to lovingly encourage their friends to join them on the path of discipleship.

Matthew 28 makes it absolutely clear that the “going and making” of disciples is not optional. Without it, discipleship cannot take place. Many today would prefer a more passive, nonthreatening approach in order to avoid being perceived as proselytizing. JLJ presents the culmination of the discipleship journey as a natural heartfelt appeal. The biblical example of the watchman is key here:

But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet to warn the people and the sword comes and takes the life of one of them, that man will be taken away because of his sin, but I will hold the watchman accountable for his blood. (Ezek 33:6)

Friends are exerting an enormous amount of pressure on the youth to do the wrong thing. When a young person is invited to use drugs, the invitation is made with incredible insistence. If all young people do is share the message of the Gospel and never invite their friends to make a decision they have fallen short. JIJ teaches young people to use a sanctified insistence for good, empowered by the moving and conviction only the Holy Spirit can bring. These are the four simple foundations that undergird the JIJ Initiative.

### Youth Discipleship Cycle

JIJ is not an event but rather the beginning of the process of growing discipleship. The first introduction is a weekend event to which the youth have been invited. It is strategically designed to lead them through several key steps. In order for this initiative to have the greatest amount of success local leadership needs to *buy-in*, because it is this local leadership which will equip and empower those young people who make a decision at the end of the weekend to become active in soul winning. The event includes not only inspiration but also training for witnessing. The youth are trained in the use of very simple tools, which include a short witnessing book, small group ice breaker cards, and a DVD based Bible study resource. The tools are in a format so simple that anyone can use them.

At the end of the weekend the youth are challenged to prayerfully step out in faith for a period of between two and three months. During this time they will be sharing the witnessing book with their friends and inviting them to participate in an evangelistic small group where they will use the DVD to share. At the end of this time a two-week

evangelistic meeting is planned to which the youth can invite their friends. During this series, their friends will have an opportunity to make a decision for Christ and be baptized. In order to accommodate both language groups, the first week is to be in Spanish and the second in English.



Figure 2. Picture of Jesus Loves Jeans resources: witnessing book, DVD, and invitations.

### **Importance of Local Leadership**

In preparation for the rally, the importance of preparing the leaders at the local level cannot be overstated. In the more conservative contexts, people have been hesitant about adopting an initiative with jeans in the title in the past. Some have mistakenly believed the initiative is about encouraging youth to wear jeans. Although unfortunate, this problem highlights some of the challenges faced whenever innovative methodologies are presented. The hesitancy of the more conservative leaders in the local area churches is that somehow this initiative will encourage the youth to *dress down* when coming to

church. Because the SDA Church is predominantly conservative, this is just one of the necessary questions that needs to be addressed with local leaders in order to move forward.

However, when these leaders see JIJ as only a *metaphor* for the love that Christ has for all types or kinds of young people they have fully embraced the initiative. And the more success the initiative has seen across North America, the less these types of questions have come up.

Because the local leaders are essential in gathering the young people and implementing a follow-through of the weekend event, it is important that there be put in place a strong accountability structure for the initiative to be successful.

### Jesus Loves Jeans Rally

This Rally is typically scheduled over a weekend—beginning on a Friday night from 7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. and all day Saturday until 7:00 P.M. This is the minimum amount of time needed to process the experience. The impact that retreats can have is confirmed by a study by Bergler and Rahn (2006). They discovered that the most likely place a youth will choose to become followers of Christ is at, “Church Camp/Retreat/Special Event/Conferences” (pp. 66-67). Therefore, a rally is an excellent tool to gather young people together and be able to create a space where youth feel relaxed and know it is all about them. The Rally has several key components common to youth gatherings that are contextualized to the local culture.

## **Prayer**

Prayer is one of the key components of the weekend. The success of anything evangelistic and life transforming must have prayer at the foundation. The leadership team itself must take ample time in prayer when visioning for the Rally. Throughout the weekend young people are led into intentional and creative forms of prayer. In this way they can begin to experience and practice its transformative power.

## **Praise and Worship**

The local context will always determine the form the praise music and worship will take at the Rally. JIJ is not about trying to implement any one form of music. Worship wars have taxed and misdirected the energies of many who have worked with youth in the past. Because there are so many different local contexts and because JIJ is focused exclusively on inviting young people to share their faith, the worship at the rallies has always been planned according to local custom. The only requirement is that this worship be “inspiring.” In those parts of the country JIJ has traveled, the need for the worship experience to be inspiring has become evident, regardless of the forms of worship initiated by the leaders.

## **Drama and Creative Tools**

Another key tool at the JIJ Rally is the appropriate use of creative connective tools, many of which are implemented during the Rally. Sometimes the local leadership creates dramas that illustrate different essentials of discipleship. Although appropriate dramas are encouraged, JIJ does not provide specific scripts. The presentations made during the weekend also use video clips to illustrate the powerful biblical connections

being presented. Several websites that provide useful resources include: [www.sermonspice.com](http://www.sermonspice.com); [www.bluefishtv.com](http://www.bluefishtv.com); [www.sermonvideos.com](http://www.sermonvideos.com); and [www.nooma.com](http://www.nooma.com). The last resource is the website of Pr. Rob Bell who is founding pastor of Mars Hill, a non-denominational church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. JLJ has found his Nooma DVDs to be excellent in creatively engaging youth with compelling biblical truth. Those that are found to be theologically appropriate are used during the rallies. The only requirement for their use is that all recording devices be turned off during their transmission.

### **Apologetics**

The first message young people are challenged with when they come to a JLJ rally is a significant amount of Christian apologetics which lays the groundwork for the rest of the time. The message is also very significant because it is the time the young people are deciding whether or not to tune out or actually connect with the event. This initial message presents the biblical principles of discipleship inductively. Young people discover that God is specifically calling them to make a difference. Many hear for the first time that they are a critical part of God's plan and mission for the church. At this juncture it is extremely important to begin presenting some of the apologetics, which will challenge their current worldview.

Some have argued that apologetics is dead and irrelevant today. McDowell (2009) has mused about some of the comments he has heard recently, such as "Young people no longer care about reasons for the existence of the Christian God. What matters is telling your narrative and being authentic" (p. 14). But this does not reveal the whole picture.



Majorities of youth have embraced moral relativism; the belief that what is true for one person is not necessarily true for another. In doing so, they abandon a belief in *absolute truth*. Yet Smith (2005) points out that “Youth are significantly relativistic when it comes to ethics, values, and religion, but they are *not* relativistic about science, mathematics, and technology” (p. 143, emphasis original). He also shows that according to the National Study of Youth and Religion “the most common answer nonreligious teens offered for why they left their faith was intellectual skepticism” (p. 89). In arguing about an absence of rationality in evangelism today McDowell (2009) quotes Tim Keller, the “avant-garde” pastor of Redeemed Presbyterian Church in Manhattan and author of the *New York Times* bestseller, *The Reason for God*:

Christians are saying that the rational isn't part of evangelism. The fact is, people are rational. They do have questions. You have to answer those questions. Don't get the impression that I think that the rational aspect takes you all the way there. But there's too much emphasis on just the personal now. (p. 20)

Some youth have never heard even simple rational evidences for faith. Also, when considering evangelism, youth will need to have a reason for even considering the need to witness if, after all, everyone is really ok. The message of Jesus Christ is extremely politically incorrect. He says, “I am *the way, the truth, and the life*. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6, emphasis added). With loving and careful questioning of the life presuppositions youth currently hold, the door can be opened to discovering the powerful basis for biblical discipleship. This loving and accepting interaction will model for them what they will in turn be to their friends. Keller (2008) points out “If you have known loving, kind, and insightful Christians, . . . you will find the intellectual case for Christianity more plausible” (p. 52).

## **Inspiration and Training**

The JLJ Rally incorporates powerful biblical preaching and exhortation. Inductive and narrative preaching are the two most common methods. The sermonic themes revolve around Old and New Testament stories of redemption. The power of the Gospel is the starting point for inspiring the young people who come to the JLJ Rally. When they have been moved by the stories of grace and redemption, they can then be presented with the role they play in continuing the story of grace for their friends and loved ones.

One of the most powerful things to witness is the relief of some of the young people when they discover the truth of biblical discipleship. Many of them know intuitively that church attendance and being spectators is not God's intention, but most have not been taught their role. The JLJ Rally moves seamlessly from inspiration to equipping as it progresses. There is time for interactive activities, which invite those attending to get to know each other better. These ice breaker type interactions are also intended to model what getting to know new people in a small group setting might be like.

The JLJ Rally touches on both the theoretical and practical aspects of discipleship. Young people are then given several tools to equip them for sharing their faith. It was never the intention to create youth evangelism resources. However, the search for adequate resources suitable for this initiative was disappointing. In general the greatest frustration was finding witnessing tools that seemed to cast young people in adult roles. The many resources available for witnessing and evangelism right now have been utilized by some young people, but it seems that the young people are drawing more

adults than peers with these tools. How unfortunate to waste the time and effort that has been put into these resources.

One goal of JLJ is to offer current resources and in this way to make a contribution, however small, so youth can use tools more in line with their youthfulness. These resources are designed to enable young people to fight the spiritual battles God is calling them to fight in their own armor. A full description of these tools will be given in more detail later. One of the tools used to help young people grasp the big picture of what the whole JLJ process looks like is a handout given near the end of the teaching time on using the resources. (See Appendix B for an example of the handout.)

### **Conclusion and Invitation**

The culmination of the JLJ Rally is an invitation to all attendees to join the youth discipleship movement. As the weekend is concluded, after the youth have been inspired by the Holy Spirit, challenged with the biblical imperative of discipleship, and given tools, they are invited to embrace discipleship. Because the leadership of the local conference and youth leaders is so important, it is key for them to be a part of this event. Their leadership will allow these young people to begin to work actively in their local churches. And they will need to lend their support as well as setting up accountability structures for the youth to implement their Small Groups effectively.

The event concludes with a prayer of consecration for all the young people who have come forward as a sign of their commitment to be a part of an evangelistic small group and receive the tools. The level of individual involvement is left for each youth to decide. Some will decide to host a small group while others will choose to merely support

it by their attendance and participation. All are invited to prayerfully commit to support youth evangelism.

### The Jesus Loves Jeans Discipleship Resources

The tools that have been created to help young people share their faith are quite simple. They are intended to be nonthreatening so that they do not create resistance from those who are to receive them. All are high quality, attractively designed creations that appeal to youth and that include the JLJ logo and theme. The majority of current resources do not seem to take into account the need for putting something in the hands of youth that inspire them, tools they can get excited about sharing.

### **Devotional and Witnessing Book**

The first tool is a short 50-page book written by Pr. José A. Pagán. This tool really serves a dual purpose: on the one hand, it is used as a devotional for the youth who attend the Rally to help them in their faith journey, and, on the other hand, it is the first tool they are challenged to share with their friends.

The book is comprised of six Gospel stories of grace and compares them to the different styles of jeans these people represent. The different chapters in the book include:

1. The Worn-Out Jean: Blind Bartimaeus
2. The Torn Jean: The Gadarene Demoniac
3. The “Daisy Duke” Jean: The Woman Caught in Adultery
4. The Designer Jean: The Rich Young Ruler
5. The White Jean: The Life of Jesus

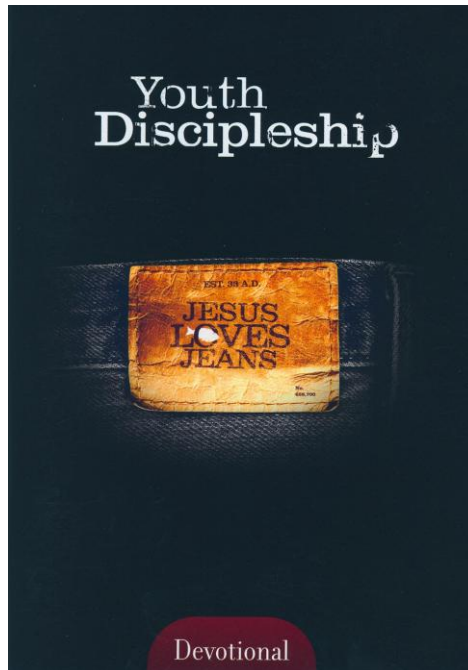


Figure 3. Jesus Loves Jeans devotional/witnessing book: *Youth Discipleship*.

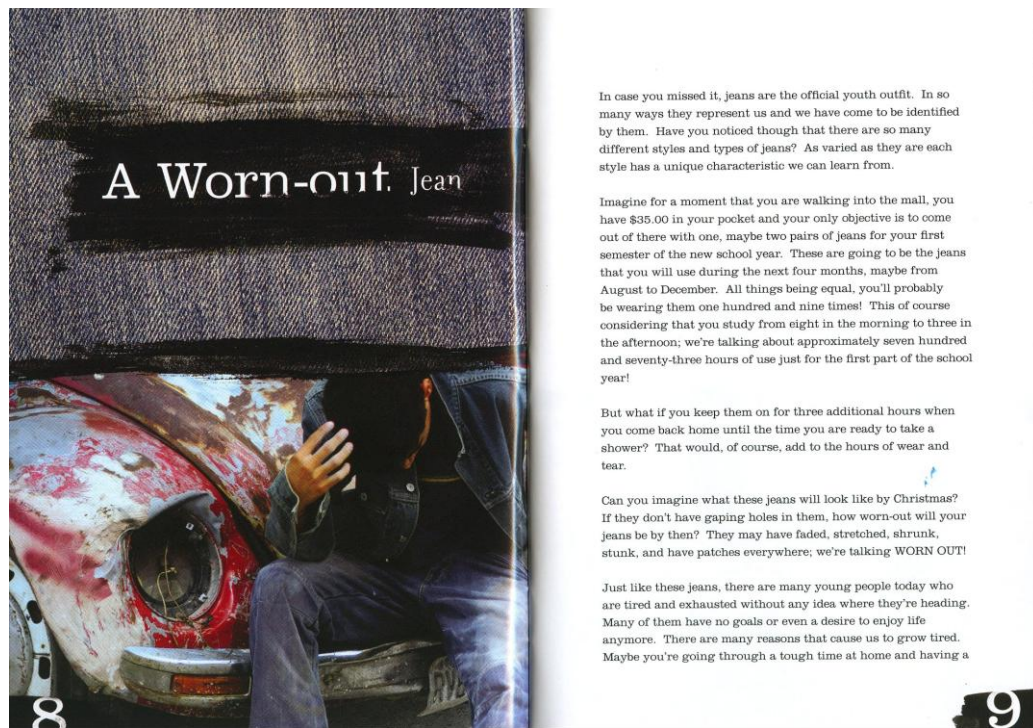


Figure 4. Example from chapter 1: "A Worn-Out Jean."

## 6. The Eternal Jean: The Wedding Banquet

It is important for both the youth and the friends they are sharing the Gospel with to understand that the Gospel message is primary. The Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ needs to be central to any evangelistic efforts. The presentation of this book is excellent and in full color.

### **Small Group Ice Breaker Cards**

The next resource was created for the youth to use in a small group setting. This deck of 62 cards comes with two open-ended questions per card for a total of 104 unique questions. There are no right-or-wrong answers to the questions on the cards.

They are intended to help generate discussion and to enable participants to open up and share their views on any number of relevant and interesting topics. The cards can be used in a number of ways. For example, each person in the group can take one, read both questions on the card and then choose which one of the two questions to answer. The deck does contain one wild card. The person who gets this card can choose another person to answer a question of their choosing. (For examples of the questions on the ice breaker cards see Appendix C.)



*Figure 5.* Picture of “Jesus Loves Jeans Ice Breaker Cards.”

### **Bible Study DVD**

Once a young person has read the witnessing book and read the Gospel stories presented, they are more likely to respond to an invitation to study more of the Bible. A DVD resource has been created so young people can study the Bible with their friends in any setting they choose. The DVD comes with 15 Bible studies that present the doctrines with a Gospel focus. The imperative of the Great Commission is to make disciples, baptize them, and then teach them to obey. Once someone is presented with the Gospel they can be drawn to Jesus and begin to inquire about His will for their lives.

The studies on the DVD use an inductive approach to present all the main doctrines of the SDA Church in a Christ-centered way. The studies are also designed to make real life applications at every step so the information does not remain theoretical but becomes practical. The titles and themes of the Bible studies on the DVD are listed below in Table 1.

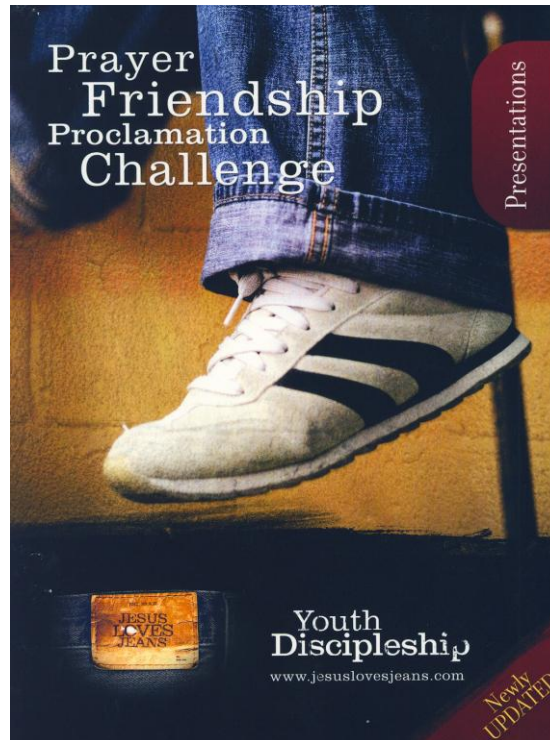
Table 1

*Jesus Loves Jeans Bible Study DVD: Titles and Themes for Each Lesson*

No.	Title	Theme
1	God's Cell Phone Number	Prayer
2	The Complete Jean Catalog	The Bible
3	Salvation	God's Plan of Redemption
4	Take a Look in the Mirror	Sin
5	How to Sleep Like a Baby	The Judgment
6	The Promised Jean	The Second Coming
7	How to Increase Your Jean's Lifespan	The Sabbath
8	You Are Not Alone	The Church
9	Here Today, Gone Tomorrow	Death
10	Witnessing is Contagious	Evangelism
11	Jeans Are Not "One Size Fits All"	Christian Norms
12	Family Jeans	The Christian Home
13	A Pocket With Limitless Cash	Stewardship
14	How to Recognize a Genuine Jean	The Spirit of Prophecy
15	I Want to Follow the White Jean	Discipleship



Each of these Bible studies appears in a simple DVD menu that can be navigated with the remote control for the DVD player. They can be played on a regular television with a DVD player or on a laptop computer with or without a projector. The idea behind this format was to have the greatest amount of flexibility for the small group leaders.



*Figure 6.* Picture of Jesus Loves Jesus Bible study DVD.

### **Website, Hope Channel DVD Training, and AdventSource.org**

Right now the website [www.jesuslovesjeans.com](http://www.jesuslovesjeans.com) is still under development but it will serve as an online networking environment with a blog for young people to Rally around in their discipleship journey. JLJ has also partnered with Hope Channel and produced a DVD Training seminar available in both English and Spanish providing the

Rally training in six separate presentations lasting about two hours. The DVD can be acquired from Hope Channel by calling 301-680-6689. All of the resources in both languages can also be purchased at AdventSource.org.

### Reaping Evangelistic Meetings

The final phase of the JLJ cycle is a reaping evangelism meeting about three months after the inspirational training Rally. Experience has shown that a two-week series is better than one because momentum can be gained in the life of the church. The first week is in Spanish and the second week is in English. The two-language presentation has had positive results: the first week all those who speak Spanish come out and then they remain for the second week since most youth and young adults of Hispanic origin who attend are second and third generation Hispanic. They have close cultural ties with the Spanish language but are also able to bridge the language gap with their friends into English. The momentum that is built by the second and third generation Hispanics coming out for the first week and remaining for the second week is effective because the first week provides a launching pad for the second.

### **Format of Jesus Loves Jesus Evangelism Program**

All of the elements of the programming at the JLJ evangelism meetings are integrated to provide for a holistic and authentic experience. Every night begins with a Nooma video from the Rob Bell series. This sets the tone with its thought-provoking theme. Immediately following the video a youth is interviewed. During the preparation phase leading up to the Evangelistic Meetings all of these initial youth interviews are

coordinated so the young people can hear fresh and local stories of conversion. The interviews conducted by a youth leader highlight what God is doing in the life of these young people for the encouragement of all those present.

After the inspiring interview for the evening, there is a time for intercessory prayer. With appropriate theme music in the background youth are invited to meditate in prayer alone or with someone. The format this takes is typically up to the local coordinators but innovation and creativity are encouraged. Once the prayer time concludes the vibrant time of worship begins. Coordinating with local leaders helps to make sure the worship is inspiring. Once again, JLJ is not concerned with the *style* of music as long as it is inspirational. However, there are musicians who agree to travel with JLJ from time to time who are worship leaders in their churches and have the gift of helping people not only sing but experience a deeper form of worship through praise. The characteristics of a good worship leader are that they be intentional about leading people into the presence of God. For this to occur, specific plans need to be made for selecting the songs and determining their natural sequence. Good worship does not happen by accident and many times the haphazard way worship is conducted produces results directly related to the time, effort and focus put into planning and rehearsing. The selection of the songs, their theme and tempo, need to bring the attendees from celebration to praise and then meditation. Before any speaker stands up to preach, it is most important for the spirit of the group to be in the correct place. To encourage this, the local church can choose a theme song that will serve as a nightly feature before the evangelistic presentation. Because it will also be sung in connection with the appeal for

baptism at the end of the presentation, it needs to be a song about surrender and consecration.

The evangelistic message for every night is directly taken from the JJJ devotional/witnessing book, and although the same themes are present in the witnessing book, they come alive in a new and fresh way. So, each night people are invited to explore the biblical story of another year that is connected to the biblical stories of grace and hope along with contemporary connections. The format of the sermons is mainly narrative and inductive as these are the best forms found to gain and maintain the attention of youth.

At the conclusion of every night an appeal for baptism is made. Although baptism is not the end of the discipleship process, it is an important stepping-stone on the journey of discipleship. The mandate of Matt 28:19-20 is to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." The youth involved in JJJ up until this point have been invited to become disciples of Jesus (learners) and have continued to learn through the DVD Bible studies some of the things He commanded. It is a natural part of the process to be baptized and then to continue the discipleship journey. Some who have been attending the youth Bible studies are now at a place spiritually where they are ready to continue moving forward in their commitment to Christ and join the church.

Every baptism at the Evangelistic Meetings is a celebration of that specific part of the journey and friends and family are encouraged to attend. Many choose to be baptized while wearing a JJJ T-shirt. These T-shirts have the JJJ logo on the front and the phrase

“I’m a disciple” on the back in either English or Spanish. As young people make their decision to be baptized, they are also joining the ranks of other disciples and, thus, as they are born again they immediately step into the role of evangelist.

Every night there are gifts and incentives for youth to come and bring their friends. For example, a drawing is linked to the registration key tags everyone is issued when they arrive. Simple contact information is received from each participant and they are issued a lanyard with a credit card sized tag with the JLJ logo on one side and a bar code on the other. The evangelism tracking program “Track’em for Jesus” created by Jac Colon is used. A company named Alarsys, Inc. out of Concord, North Carolina produced the key tags for the meetings. These tools have been very helpful in making sure nobody falls through the cracks. This information is also crucial for follow-up after the meetings are over.

The nightly program lasts about an hour and a half, typically from 7:00 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. A sample program with the time each segment appears below in Table 2 below.

Another important part of the JLJ Initiative is that every meeting is broadcast live over the internet. This also gives youth an opportunity to be a part of the production team. They can be involved with managing a video camera or operating the video engineering of the feed that goes on the web. Both the registration and the video production are key roles the youth play in involvement during a JLJ evangelism meeting.

Table 2

*Sample Program Schedule for the Jesus Loves Jesus Evangelistic Program*

Program Elements	Time (P.M.)
Nooma Video (No recording devices are allowed at this time)	7:00
Welcome and Youth Interview	7:10
Group or Individual Prayer Time	7:15
Praise and Worship	7:25
Evangelistic Message	7:45
Appeal for Baptism	8:20
Baptism (This is done during the Appeal)	-
Gifts and Adjournment	8:30

**Summary**

JLJ is an initiative that uses a metaphor to show how different styles of jeans represent different kinds of people. This metaphor is coupled with several biblical stories of grace showing how Jesus came into each of these people's lives and changed them forever. When young people identify with how the Bible speaks to them and see God's love expressed towards them great things happen. At the JLJ Rally, supported by the local leadership, youth and young adults are challenged to step into a life of genuine biblical discipleship.

For many, the revelation that there is more to following Jesus than attending church and being a spectator brings inspiration and revival. The cycle of youth evangelism is set in motion at the JLJ Rally and any youth who is willing can make a decision to work for the salvation of their friends for a period of about three months after which a two-week youth evangelism meeting is held. At the end of the Evangelistic

Meetings the cycle of evangelism continues indefinitely as the youth continue in their Small Groups and the new converts join them in continuing living out biblical discipleship.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JESUS LOVES JEANS YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP INITIATIVE AT THE HOUSTON INTERNATIONAL SDA CHURCH

This chapter will go through a brief history of the HISDA and also provide a demographic background for the city of Houston where the church is located. This information when combined with the profile of the HISDA will provide a good picture for the context of the implementation of the JLJ Initiative. The implementation, its assessment, and results will be analyzed. The chapter concludes with a summary and evaluation of the JLJ Initiative.

#### **Profile of the Houston International SDA Church**

Several factors help provide an accurate picture of the context for the HISDA in which the JLJ Youth Discipleship Initiative was implemented. These include a brief history of the denomination in Texas and Houston as well as the demographics of Houston at large and a profile of the youth in the church.

#### **Personal Ministerial History in Houston, Texas**

My family and I have served the HISDA since May of 2004. These years have been some of the most rewarding years of our family's ministry. When we arrived, the church had on its membership rolls about 250 members and an attendance of between 90-120 people every Sabbath. God faithfully added significant growth over the years so that



by 2009 the church's membership had climbed to over 450 and its attendance on some Sabbaths peaked well over 600. Early in 2008 the church planted the Sugar Land International Church, to allow for continued growth. Although these figures point in a very positive direction, there has still been a significant loss of the youth and young adults from our church. The figures for this will be provided in more detail later in this chapter.

### Brief Denominational History of Texas and Houston

The Texas Conference of SDAs was organized in 1878 and reorganized in 1932 according to the 2009 yearbook (*SDA Yearbook*, 2009, p. 228). The reason for the reorganization was for a more efficient geographical distribution because of the size of the state of Texas. The Houston Central Church that was established on July 7, 1900 is the oldest English speaking church in the city of Houston (*Texas Conference SDA Directory*, 2009-2010, p. v-129). The oldest Spanish speaking church, the Houston Spanish Robertson Church was established on January 1, 1960 (p. v-151). The HISDA was established on June 1, 1981 (p. v-133). This broad historical view gives some detail of the growth in Texas and specifically in the city of Houston. It shows that the SDA Church has been established in Houston for over 110 years and the Spanish work has been around over 50 years. Part of the history of the HISDA has involved the union of several churches at different times through the nearly 30 years of its existence.

### Demographic Study of Houston, Texas

The city of Houston comprises a very large metropolitan area. The census taken in 2000 showed a population of 1.9 million people and estimated a continued growth rate of

9% by the year 2006 (US Census—Quick Facts, 2000). The Texas Department of State Health Services (2009) revised figures showing that by 2010 Houston, Sugar Land, and Baytown—the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) significant to the Greater Houston Area—would have 5.97 million people. This shows the dramatic growth Houston has seen in the last decade.

Harris County, where the church is located, was estimated to grow to a little over 4 million people by 2010 (The Texas Department of State Health Services, 2009). According to Wikipedia (2010d), “From 2000 to 2030, the [Houston] metropolitan area is projected by Woods & Poole Economics to rank fifth in the nation in population growth—adding 2.66 million people.” It is also significant that in the demographic of those aged 20-34 the projected population according to the Texas Department of State Health Services (2010) is of just over 1 million (Texas Department of State Health Services, 2010). This segment of the current population accounts for nearly 50% of what was formerly the total population of Houston in 2000.

According to the above report the demographic of those aged 20-34 represents 23% of the population of Texas and in Harris county 24.4%. Nearly a quarter, one out of every four people, living in Harris County are between the ages of 20-34. It is important to point this figure out, as this segment of the population of Houston, and specifically Harris County, is one shown by Sahlin and Richardson (2008) to be significantly underrepresented in the SDA Church. It is helpful to measure this same figure in Houston and compare it to the same demographic representation at the HISDA and will be done below.

## History of the Houston International SDA Church

The official organization date of the HISDA as listed by the Texas Conference is June 1, 1981 (Y. España, personal communication, September 6, 2010). However, a current member has provided additional clarification. According to J. D. Altemus (personal communication, September 3, 2010) the Dairy Ashford SDA Church and the South West Houston SDA Church merged in 1992 under the name Houston International. Several members also provided a history of the pastors who have served the church since 1992: Dan Gleason from 1992-1997, Clive Johnson had a six-month interim in 1997, Harry Adams from 1997-2004, and myself from 2004 to the present. During this time the ethnic diversity has increased which helps explain how the church has been able to host and help launch several ethnic church plants since 1990: the United African Church, the Houston Haitian Bethany Church, the Houston Vietnamese Church, and the Sugar Land International Church. (J. D. Altemus, V. Fernandez, & C. Johnston, personal communication, September 6, 2010).

## Current Profile of the Houston International SDA Church

The HISDA currently has 445 members (Texas Conference of SDA, April 2010), and is appropriately called the International Church as it has at least 44 countries represented (HISDA Church Directory, 2010; C. Johnston, personal communication, September 6, 2010). These numbers fluctuate some because of the evangelism happening on a yearly basis as well as the fluidity of people moving in and out of Houston. The increased mobility of people can be seen in Houston first hand. Some people come to Houston for housing, employment, or educational possibilities while others move away

for similar opportunities elsewhere. “According to data from Geographical Mobility: 2009, 37.1 million people 1 year and older changed residences in the U.S. within the past year. This represents an increase from 35.2 million in 2008” (PR Newswire, 2009). The annual data compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau shows this to be an established pattern, and this reality has led the church to retain a multicultural flair since those who come and go have come to know the church to be cosmopolitan and seek it out for this very reason.

#### Profile of the Youth and Young Adults of the Houston International SDA Church

The church currently has a total of 177 members who fall into the category of youth and young adult (Texas Conference of SDA, May 11, 2010). For the purpose of this study youth and young adults are being defined as those who are between the ages of 12-34 years of age. Those who are aged 12-18 are classified as youth while those who are between the ages of 19-34 are classified as young adults. Because this terminology remains in flux within sociology itself, the parameters presented here fall somewhat in line with established norms. Evidence of these classifications has already been covered in the literature review.

These numbers are limited to those who are on the official membership rolls of the church. There are an additional number of people within these age ranges who attend the church but are not official members of the church. In spite of the delimitation set forth here, it will still prove helpful to look at this cross section.

There are currently 77 total members who fall into the category of those aged 12-18 years of age. This number represents a total of 17.3% of the congregation. There are currently 100 members who fall into the category of young adults, those aged 19-34. This

number represents a total of 22.5% of the congregation. When taken together both the youth and young adults represent nearly a total of 40% of the congregation (Texas Conference of SDA, May 11, 2010).

These percentages may appear positive but on closer inspection they are not because 58 of the 100 young adults on the church books no longer attend and are unaccounted for, 17 more are away at school or attending another church, which leaves only 23 who actively attend, comprising only 5.2% of the congregation. When this 5.2% is compared to the 24.4% of those aged 20-34 for the city of Houston and Harris County, the church is far behind with its representation in this age group (see Texas Department of State Health Services, 2010).

#### Comparison and Contrast With Profile by the Center for Creative Ministry

The demographic survey of the North American Division by Sahlin and Richardson (2008) for the Center for Creative Ministry is the most recent of its kind within the SDA Church, which makes it a useful tool to compare and contrast it with the local dynamics of the HISDA. This analysis will be limited to those aged 19-34. According to Sahlin and Richardson (2008), 20% of the U.S. population is aged 20-34, which, although slightly lower, is similar to Houston's 24.4% as reported by the Texas Department of State Health Services (2010). Sahlin and Richardson (2008) have also concluded that in the SDA Church only 8% of this age group is represented which is slightly higher than the 5.2% in the HISDA. A graph comparing age demographics for the population of the United States and the SDA Church is included in Figure 1 on page 12.

This means that while the city of Houston has more young adults (24.4%) than the national average (20%), the HISDA Church has fewer young adults (5.2%) than the average SDA Church (8%). The challenge is obvious.

### Success Stories of the JLJ Initiative

The following anecdotal references are intended to provide evidence in the life of a few people of how the JLJ Initiative has taken them from a devitalized and disaffiliated existence to a vibrant and passionate discipleship experience. There are many, many more, but space only allows for these few.

#### **Israel Garcia**

In 2006, Israel was a 20-something, devitalized and disaffiliated young adult who grew up in the SDA Church. His life was heading in the wrong direction fast, as he experimented with drugs and alcohol and joined a gang in Houston. He had dropped off the radar of his local church when a loved one invited him to a JLJ Rally. He reluctantly agreed to come and his life began to change. As the weekend evolved he decided to be baptized and was adamant about not leaving the Rally without begin baptized. That holy boldness would be seen time and time again over the next few months as he began to seek God's will more fully and began to embrace a life of discipleship. In preparation for an upcoming JLJ evangelistic meeting he decided to fast 40 days! It was during this time that he began to be led by God's Spirit in a mighty way.

One day he approached some gang members in a park and began speaking to them about Jesus. They were all high because of the marijuana they were smoking, and in this state one of them pulled a gun and pointed it at Israel's head. The gang threatened to

kill him right there nevertheless Israel told him he had no problem dying because he knew Jesus had saved him, but that the gang member had no assurance of the same. The gang member lowered the gun and fell to his knees as he began to sob and ask for help. Israel led him and the other gang members to Jesus right then and there. Today, several years later, Israel is preparing to study for the ministry full-time. I had the pleasure of marrying him to a beautiful girl named Theresa, whom God brought into his life at another evangelistic meeting at the HISDA, and they are expecting their first child. Both actively exist on the path of discipleship. When anyone asks Israel what sparked his personal revival and reformation he praises God for JLJ.

### **Alvaro Montalvo**

At the age of 13 Alvaro decided he had had enough of church. Being a third generation Adventist and never having discovered a personal connection with Jesus he stopped attending. His father, a long-standing member, and head elder of the church could have forced him back to church but chose to wait on the Lord. In 2006 Alvaro accepted an invitation to come to the JLJ evangelistic meeting. There he discovered for the first time a personal relationship with Jesus. He began a walk of discipleship there in 2008, at age 17; he began leading a JLJ evangelistic small group. In 2009 as he was graduating from High School, he led out in the youth Sabbath School class and became the youth evangelist and JLJ small group coordinator for his church. That same year he was nominated to serve as a youth elder for his church.

In this context and with much support from his church, he decided to become a pastor at Antillean College in Puerto Rico. At the time of this writing he is beginning his

second year of theology, and has been named student associate pastor for the English speaking church located on the campus of the college. He also testifies that his personal revival and discipleship journey was sparked by JLJ.

### **Dolores Agrinzonis**

In 2008, the JLJ team had arrived in Richardson, Texas for a Rally and Dolores accidentally stumbled upon it. She had dropped off her kids at the local SDA Church in order for them to participate in the children's programming of the church and had come to pick them up. She had no interest in church, being another 20-something young adult who was disaffiliated, yet wanting her kids to have some religious connection. She walked in just in time for the final appeal of the Rally. It shook her so much that she ran outside and jumped into her truck and began blasting reggaeton music to try to quiet the voice of the Holy Spirit. Her plans were to go dancing later that night at a local club where she was a featured dancer on one of the exhibition platforms. She told the Spirit to go away, that she would not listen or surrender, but in spite of the ear-splitting music God's Spirit won that night. She came back into the church and came forward in tears while the pastor was finishing his appeal.

Months later she was baptized at the JLJ evangelism meetings and thus continued her walk on the path of discipleship. She encouraged many young people during those meetings to be baptized, but God had more. God opened a door for her to travel to the East Coast and present an entire weekend training other youth and young adults on how to share their testimony and witness to their friends. She gave them her testimony of how God had freed her from drugs and alcohol, and the miraculous calling in Richardson. At



the end of weekend she let all those youth in on the fact that it was her first time directing an evangelism youth training event. They all stared in disbelief! Today, the Chesapeake Conference has moved her permanently to Virginia where she travels through the churches on the weekends and preaches and trains young people on youth evangelism. She remains passionately serving Christ and testifies that her revival began through JLJ.

### **Implementation of the Jesus Loves Jeans Initiative**

The desired outcome for of the JLJ Initiative at the HISDA was to have at least a 10% participation rate from the youth and young adults who are documented as being official members of the church. The HISDA Church board voted on January 9, 2010 to host the JLJ Initiative at the church (see Appendix D for the official church board minutes). Although the leadership as well as the youth department had been working for many months prior to the official vote, it is important to point out that this was the official meeting that approved the launching of the project as documented in the official minutes of the church board.

#### **Preparatory Phase**

The JLJ Initiative at the HISDA followed the specific process previously outlined in Chapter 4. Each of these steps with their individual characteristics and rationale were implemented as faithfully as possible in order to ensure a sound analysis of the initiative. This was important in order to gauge the success of the initiative in light of its past performance in other locations. Several key committees were formed including but not limited to: Invitation, Public Relations, Prayer Warriors, Reception, Registration, Platform, Music, and Children's Programming (for a complete list as well as a

description of these committees please refer to Appendix D). Preparation and organization has always been a vital key to the success of the JLJ Initiative.

For every previous implementation, Pastors Pagán, Murillo, and I have traveled to speak to the local leadership before moving forward with the initiative in order to ensure cooperation and success. Because this initiative was born in Texas and because of my personal connection to the HISDA, the leadership had already heard about the initiative's success and was very open and willing for it to be brought in. In addition, many years had passed since the initiative had been developed and the news of its success among the youth and young adults of the conference had also reached the church. The leadership of the church immediately gave it full support and together set about to organize the necessary committees.

#### Implementation Phase

As mentioned, the implementation phase had already begun with the preparation and dialogue among the local leadership of HISDA. When all of the necessary preliminary steps had been taken, it was time to conduct the Rally.

#### **Jesus Loves Jeans Rally**

The JLJ Rally began on Friday January 22nd at 7:05 P.M—the unusual time was selected in order to stand out more specifically in the minds of those who would attend. It continued until Saturday evening, January 23rd. The event was promoted through the “Jesus Loves Jesus” Facebook group. The specific message sent to individuals promoting the event read:

If you've ever wondered why just going to church week after week has left you feeling empty. . . . If you've ever wondered, "Does God have something more for me to do in this life?" . . . If you're tired of the endless cycle of repetition without meaning in your worship experience. . . . Then give yourself a chance to experience Jesus Loves Jeans this weekend! Hundreds of youth all across the country and globe have come away from this event with a huge passion and purpose for living the life of a disciple! Maybe this is your moment? Maybe this is your time? Come find out why . . . Jesus Loves Jeans!

The Facebook announcement went out to a total of 337 people who formed part of the Houston area youth in the "Jesus Loves Jeans" Facebook group. The responses were as follows: 72 confirmed their attendance, 77 listed they might attend, and 188 did not respond online. On the first day of the Rally, the church had over 500 in attendance, from at least 5 area churches. The furthest church to come to the Rally was the Baytown SDA Church, which traveled about an hour to bring their youth. For the purposes of this study I will focus on the responses and follow-up from those who regularly attend the HISDA.

An email was also sent out to the JLJ mailing list with a language appropriate commercial. The commercial can be found on YouTube: English at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdsaRhlghGo&feature=search> and Spanish at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcwOQF\\_K8\\_4&feature=search](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcwOQF_K8_4&feature=search). The commercial in English was featured on some of the Sabbaths leading up to the JLJ Rally in order to promote it among the members as well as continue sharing the general vision of the initiative.

The Rally enjoyed a successful launch with the speakers lined up for the two-day event. I spoke on Friday night, Josue Murillo spoke Saturday morning for the divine service, and José A. Pagán closed the Rally on Saturday night. Every message was inspirational and contained a specific challenge for the youth to take action.

The whole weekend prioritized the youth as its focus. The response to this was significant. The youth had a sense that the weekend was theirs. There were several program elements that allowed for this. One key was to have the youth leading out in all the liturgical elements. Every element of the program was run by the youth of the church: the prayer time, praise and worship, and testimony and sharing. This enfranchisement and participation generated a very positive result.

Every element of the weekend Rally was well received. The messages, multimedia, and praise and worship all provided a spirit-filled experience, where the youth and young adults received instruction and inspiration. Each person in attendance at the Rally received a handout explaining the key points of the JLJ Initiative as well as a decision form (see Appendix C). This form was put in everyone's hands in preparation for the final altar call. The example of the handout (shown in Appendix C) was used in a former JLJ Rally in San Antonio, Texas in 2007, and was created and designed by Pr. Josh Murillo. Some of the key elements included in the handout include a description of the JLJ Initiative and its biblical foundation, a rationale for witnessing, instructions for leading evangelistic Small Groups, meeting formats, aids for compiling a *friends list*, and a signed commitment form.

The litmus test for the Rally's effectiveness has always been the number of youth who accept the discipleship challenge at the end. We prepared 100 JLJ evangelism kits 50 in English and 50 in Spanish. Each kit was placed in a small gift bag with a Bible study DVD, witnessing book, and ice breaker cards. People who came forward for the final altar call received a gift bag with their materials. They also filled out the commitment form with their contact information, and signed it after the final prayer. All

100 kits were given out and the leadership had to take names and addresses of 36 additional individuals who were unable to get one that night. These kits were later mailed to them.

The reason the final appeal and response are considered the litmus test for the effectiveness of the weekend is that it demonstrates how much the message has been received and integrated. Many people consider this type of invitation to be the most difficult, because it is an invitation to a high level of commitment. Additionally, there is fear and apprehension among some youth to do personal evangelism because they do not feel like they have all the answers or feel confident in their faith. The weekend Rally is designed to address these questions, doubts, and fears directly while providing resources so simple and straightforward that most anxiety dissipates and courage replaces fear. The final call usually indicates how much this message has been absorbed. When 136 people accepted kits and signed a commitment card to conduct youth evangelistic Small Groups, this represented for me, a significant success. These kits represent a potential equipping of 136 young people empowered and equipped for the work of youth discipleship. Exciting indeed!

The final count for the evangelism kits accepted by the youth of the HISDA was only 26. This number reveals that most of the kits went to youth from other churches who accepted the challenge. Compared with the other churches, the HISDA represented only a modest segment among the churches that made a decision for youth evangelism participation. Typically the host church response is larger because it is expected to have the largest number of attendees. At most events there are usually a greater number of participants from the sponsoring church than from other churches. Therefore, it is

reasonable to infer that there were more youth from the HISDA present, yet this did not translate into greater participation.

### **Evangelistic Small Groups**

The list of those who agreed to lead or participate in an evangelistic small group was comprised of a varied spectrum of demographic characteristics. Of the 26 who made their commitment to youth evangelism: 9 were male and 17 were female. Participants age varied also from 12 to 34. Of the 26 respondents 30% of those fell within the demographic of age 19-34. The total number of respondents represented 5.8% of the total membership of 445.

Since there was not a sufficiently desirable amount of time allowed between the JLJ Rally and the implementation of the Evangelistic Meetings the effectiveness of the Small Groups was not felt as much as it could have been. The Rally was held on January 22-23, 2010 and the Evangelistic Meetings were held from March 13-27, 2010. This allowed only six weeks for the Small Groups to develop and be implemented whereas the typical implementation time of the JLJ evangelistic Small Groups is 12 weeks. Therefore only three Small Groups were able to organize in this shortened time period. Seven to ten individuals attended each group. In spite of the reduced effectiveness of the Small Groups due to the time constraint, it has still been shown to be an effective element of the strategy as a whole. One of the locations where the JLJ evangelistic Small Groups have shown remarkable success is in the Southern California Conference. The time frame between the Rally and the evangelism meetings was long enough to allow the proper follow-up from local leadership.

## **Evangelistic Meetings**

The Evangelistic Meetings were conducted from March 13-27, 2010. The meetings began on Saturday evening March 13th and ended Saturday evening March 27th. The nightly programming followed an elaborate and precise schedule (see Appendix D). The schedule demonstrates an emphasis on timeliness and organization. One of the challenges of these particular dates is that the majority of the participants were in school and found it challenging to come out during the week on school nights. In spite of this, the programming coordinators were committed to starting and ending on time promising to help people get home at a reasonable hour.

A total of 165 people were registered during the two-week meetings. Of these, 21(12%) were over the age of 35, 54 (33%) were between the ages of 19-34, and 90 (55%) were age 10-18. Of those attending and registered, 88% were within the age range up to 34 years of age. There were some who chose not to register and infants and children under the age of 10 were not registered.

What is immediately evident from the registration numbers is that the target audience was prioritized and reached. The JLJ Youth Discipleship Initiative was created with youth in mind and has always reached a portion of the young adults. The number of people to come out to the meetings was significant because no other evangelistic effort had catalyzed this group before. In the past, Evangelistic Meetings for adults and the church population at large had benefited some of the youth and young adults, but never before had this many youth and young adults come out. The only evidence for this is my personal experience in the church, although comparable figures and records are not available at the time of this writing.

Both weeks of evangelism were well attended and those who came were immensely blessed. The musicians, praise director, and singers were all youth and young adults. Some of the musicians were as young as nine years of age. The professionalism of these musicians was not lost on those attending. The quality of their performance and the seriousness with which they performed their duty was inspiring. Every evening the ministry team would gather for prayer and a short visioning session. The leadership would direct their minds and hearts to the reason they were participating. One important note everyone was asked to focus on was to examine the *big picture* of what they were doing. For the musicians, they were asked to look beyond merely playing instruments and see how they were literally directing people in the worship of the Living God. Also those who had menial tasks such as registering guests or preparing gifts to be given out at the end during the raffle were asked to not merely see statistics but potential candidates of salvation and the kingdom of God.

Throughout the week there was a need for close collaboration by all parties involved. Because of the number of details that required coordination, continual assessment took place each night. As is always the case with such events, many challenges presented themselves, but they were met with prayer, humility, and collaboration. Toward the end of the meetings, the youth who had been leading out began to do things intuitively and took initiative for tasks without being asked.

One visitor named Alejandra spoke to me one night, “I wish I could be here every day!” When I asked her why, she said she was drawn to how genuine people were and how happy they were to see her and befriend her. This young girl was a 22-year-old college nursing student.



The events gave testimony that the young people were crystallized for service and their God-given talents were put into action. One of the things that was clear through the whole process was just how gifted the youth and young adults of the church are and how they are both willing and able to take the church on their shoulders with the proper guidance and direction. One of the cautions I mentioned to them as they served was I did not expect them to get it right, but to try their best—I was ok with them not doing things perfectly but rather wanted them to do something. Initiative would be much more valuable than perfection. The camaraderie and the confidence the young people developed was significant.

#### Evaluation of the Initiative and Results

The implementation of the JLJ Youth Discipleship Initiative at the HISDA met the stated expectations. At the outset of the initiative the goal was to involve 10% of the membership of the church listed as youth and young adult those between the ages of 12-34. This represents almost twice as many who are currently active. As has already been mentioned, there were a total of 165 people who registered and participated during the two weeks of meetings. Of these, 54 (33%) were between the ages of 19-34; and 90 (55%) were 18 years of age and younger. Of those attending and registered, 88% were within the age range up to 34 years of age, and 21(12%) were over the age of 35. Ninety of those, who registered, were official members of HISDA making their participation during the JLJ Initiative a total of 54.5% participation from this segment. The goal at the outset was to have 10% participation and the actual participation was greater than the stated expectations.

The planning, promotion, organization, and implementation of this project has many benefits to highlight. The church as a whole was energized and encouraged. The face of youthful possibilities was highlighted. There were many positive testimonies from long-standing members and leaders who were very pleased with the initiative. To have the youth featured in every aspect of ministry and to see them involved in soul winning certainly illuminated their potential. The youth themselves were grateful for being depended on and rose to the challenge. It seems that they embraced the high expectations in a very positive way and the Spirit of God was seen to work in and through them from beginning to end.

At the end of the meetings 12 people were baptized: eight were 18 years of age and younger, two were between the ages of 19-34, and two over the age of 35. There were an additional 11 decisions for baptism during the meetings by those who came forward in response to a baptismal invitation, and were prepared for baptism later: five were 18 years of age and younger, four were between the ages of 19-34, and one was an adult. The figures for baptisms and decisions for baptism correspond fairly well with the representation figures of those attending the meetings. The vast majority attending the meetings were youth, followed next by young adults, and lastly by adults.

The JIJ Initiative was shown to be effective at reaching, mobilizing, and equipping the youth of the church. It was also shown to have some degree of success among young adults. With these very modest results there is some evidence that this initiative shows promise in the principles it embraces and espouses.

## **Summary**

The JIJ Initiative brought revival and encouragement to the HISDA. The youth and young adults of the church were both enfranchised and empowered in biblical discipleship principles. They were able to work in coordination with the church board and local leadership, and to use their gifts for the cause of God in a very effective way. The resources it took to put this initiative together pale in comparison to the long-lasting effects in the lives of these young people. The church expressed its approval and appreciation of the professionalism and thoroughness of the process. The challenges facing youth and young adults in Houston as well as at the HISDA remain, but this initiative has served as one example of the good that can be accomplished when young people are challenged, equipped, and supported.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

#### **Summary**

Many studies show the growing number of youth and young adults who are leaving the ranks of the SDA Church. One of the reasons proposed in this dissertation for this decline is the lack of genuine biblical discipleship principles that include the elements of evangelization and retention. If young people are mentored and aided in discovering the joy of sharing their faith, their own experience will be revitalized and they will cease practicing the empty and void modality of merely being spectators in church.

The HISDA has not been immune to these very real dynamics and has suffered the disaffiliation of a great number of its youth and young adults. The aim of this project dissertation has been to present the JLJ Youth Discipleship Initiative as a tool for equipping, empowering, activating, and reclaiming the youth and young adults at the HISDA. This initiative has already shown significant success in different localities including but not limited to the Texas Conference, the New Jersey Conference, and the Southern California Conference.

From the year 2006 to 2008 over 270 youth and young adults were baptized in the Texas Conference as a direct result of JLJ (J. Murillo, personal communication,

September 6, 2010). In the Southern California Conference since 2009, two training events have been held, 1,200 youth and young adults have been trained, 155 evangelistic Small Groups have been launched, and 200 have been baptized, (C. Acosta, personal communication, September 6, 2010), and in the New Jersey Conference about 60 were baptized as a result of the initiative (L. Cortes, personal communication, September 6, 2010).

As the church moves forward to engage methodologies appropriate for retaining and reclaiming its youth and young adults in the current culture it cannot ignore relevant sociological principles such as the phenomenon of adolescence and the current *post-Christian* cultural posture. An understanding of these realities is imperative as the church moves forward missiologically. The current age is looking for authentic and organic connections with people. The church has failed many times to connect with people where they are culturally, but there is hope as more and more young people embrace the challenges before them. This dissertation has highlighted the significant hunger for meaning and inclusion experienced by most of them in this current age.

The JIJ Initiative is only an excuse to get young people involved in the mission of the church. Its aim is not to have young people dress down when they come to church, as some have mistakenly assumed, but rather to help them see that Jesus loves each and every one of them individually. The different styles of jeans describe different kinds of people in the Gospel stories: worn-out, torn, designer, Daisy Dukes, white, and eternal jeans. Each represents a powerful Gospel story of grace in which Jesus encountered someone and changed their life forever. When young people realize that JIJ, they realize

Jesus loves them. Their lives will never be the same. They will connect with their local churches and get involved.

There are five core values that are inseparable from the JIJ initiative. These are:

1) Dependence – as expressed through prayer, 2) Reproduction – the emphasis on the process being repeated in the life of another, 3) Intensely Missional – seeking to remain true to the calling of the church, 4) Accountability – the need for precise follow through of those involved, and 5) Relational – the love of Jesus for young people is central.

Without these values this initiative will be incomplete. Consideration and faithfulness to these values needs to be made by all those who would implement this initiative.

### **Recommendations**

The process of this project has brought out several key elements that deserve further attention. One of those elements is the refining of my own understanding of youth evangelism and its contribution to youth discipleship at large. This growth in understanding has led to several reflections and recommendations.

### **Some Things I Have Learned**

As a result of pioneering and developing the JIJ Initiative, I have learned several key things in relationship to youth evangelism. Chief among these is the yearning young people have to be involved in something significant and life changing. Many are aware of the bravery and courageous spirit in young people, what is startling is the effect of bringing into focus for them the primacy of the mission of the church and seeing them add their explosive characteristics to God's calling on their lives. Young people are not

apathetic, but are yearning to be challenged and invited to do something life changing, earth moving, and significant.

Another key element I have found in youth discipleship is that young people are some of the most effective bridges between their unbelieving friends and the message of salvation. One young person in Richardson, Texas who had been invited to the JLJ evangelism meetings had been hearing the message of grace and responding to it all week long. He had already bought tickets for the Friday night performance of the Daddy Yankee concert, a reggaeton (a dance music genre) artist, and when the car he was in with all of his unbelieving friends *coincidentally* drove by the church on its way to the concert as the JLJ meeting was beginning he made them pull over because he needed to go to church that night and not the concert. His unbelieving friends thought he was crazy because of all the money he had spent and the good time they were sure to have, but the influence of his believing friends was stronger. This is only one story of many where the effectiveness of a sanctified influence of Godly friendships can be seen as youth reach other youth.

Lastly, although there are innumerable things I have learned in spearheading this initiative, I have been amazed at the competence and giftedness young people possess. This can be an extremely surprising element for those seeking to take a first step in involving young people in youth evangelism. Their innovative and creative expressions are matchless, and if given the opportunity, church leaders will be more than pleasantly surprised to see young people put effectively to use their God given gifts.

## Future Revisions and Modifications

If given the opportunity to go through another doctoral implementation of the JLJ Initiative I would certainly revise and modify the process. One of the recommendations I believe would be beneficial is to include the “Valuegenesis Faith-Maturity Scale” at the beginning of the initiative to those involved both in leadership and a select group of participants, and then repeat it at the end of the initiative. In this way there would be one other additional measure for assessing the effectiveness of the initiative for increasing the spirituality of the youth and young adults who participate. This scale seems to be a good tool in doing a significant assessment of spirituality on the lives of young people.

Another helpful tool I would like to implement in the future would be to conduct focus group interviews of the youth and young adults who have become inactive. There may be a great deal to benefit from in regards to contemporary information these folk could provide. Many times evangelistic initiatives are developed without direct input from the target audience. If these youth and young adults had an opportunity to be a part of a focus group where they could freely express their opinions and feelings, much could be gleaned. They could also possibly critique the JLJ Initiative as to its strengths and weaknesses and in this way a better initiative would emerge.

One of the limitations of this project was the shortened time between the Rally and the Evangelistic Meetings. This only left about five weeks in between for the young people to implement their Small Groups. This turned out to be a negative factor because most of the groups did not benefit from enough time to develop good cohesion and gain momentum. In retrospect I would have much preferred to have at least three months between the Rally and the implementation of the Evangelistic Meetings. This would



ensure that a proper launch and small group implementation could occur. Unfortunately this project contained unavoidable time constraints and I had to make do, but this is something I would definitely change in the future.

### Projected Ideas for Jesus Loves Jesus

What does the future hold for JJJ? As has previously been stated, JJJ is merely an excuse to get young people activated in the mission of the church. What will the next evolution of JJJ be? Whatever new forms and different applications emerge, one thing is for sure, the vision of training and equipping young people to become active in sharing their faith will never change. Yet even now there are lessons being learned from what has happened in this latest installment. One of the elements I think are key in order to expand the relevance of JJJ is to infuse a community service component to it. As part of the initiative, during the two weeks of evangelism, take the time during the weekends to specifically get those attending involved in a practical outreach event where all involved would be able to corporately accomplish something meaningful in the community. This incorporation would add another hue and richness to the message being proclaimed and would model the practical aspects of discipleship.

### Longitudinal Study and Innovative Methodologies

A longitudinal study would be beneficial to measure the long-term retention of the JJJ Initiative. In this way a more significant evaluation can be made to discover how many youth and young adults remain in the church following and as a result of this initiative. Time constraints prevented this study from conducting such an evaluation.

Other methodologies for youth discipleship need to be created, such as one that incorporates an eschatological understanding of the SDA Church that remains faithful to the sociological and cultural realities of the current age. There needs to be a synergistic process that embodies the church's unique and prophetic calling with a principled approach shaped in creative and innovative ways.

### **Conclusion**

The JLJ Initiative tapped into the participatory and experiential needs of today's youth and young adults in relevant and strategic ways. Through its implementation, the HISDA was inspired and has experienced revival. The talents and gifts of these youth and young adults came to the forefront of the church. They were seen to be fighting spiritual battles in their own armor. They were released to experience and minister within different and creative forms more in line with their interests and cultural expressions. These results bode well for the future of youth ministry locally and potentially elsewhere. It is my hope that others considering equipping and empowering the youth and young adults of their church would take courage. Young people are willing to be involved and inspired by their church leaders. They are waiting for others to give them an opportunity. My prayer is that these pages may encourage someone in leadership to risk involving young people in the mission of the church. The future depends on it.

## APPENDIX A

### ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS FROM CHAPTERS 2 AND 3

#### **Additional Analysis From Chapter 2**

##### Evangelizing Youth in the Old Testament

#### **How Beautiful the Feet**

Blenkinsopp continues describing the content of the message. “What the herald announces is first presented in general terms, well-being . . . and good . . . then, more specifically, as victory that spells salvation . . . and the reign of God” (2002, p. 342). This reign is an eternal reign that is global and universal, encompassing all of heaven and earth.

Early Christians looked to this passage both for theological meaning and direction. “From this text early Christians derived both the unique form in which to tell the story of their founder—euaggelion, ‘good tidings, gospel’—and the essence of his message—the coming kingdom of God” (Blenkinsopp, p. 344).

#### **You Shall Be My Witnesses**

Being chosen bears the responsibility of faithfulness. God’s choosing of Israel made them privileged but also charged them with responsibility. Elwell (1988a) points out where the Jews stumbled in this regard:

NT Christian discipleship is firmly rooted in the OT, in the idea of the forming and calling of Israel out of the nations to be God's peculiar treasure (Ex 19:5) and to bear testimony to his name among the nations (Dt 4:6-8). The call was buried in Jewish exclusivism until the advent of the desire of all nations (Hg 2:7). (p. 630)

Because the call to evangelization is an honor and privilege for young and old alike, it is worth remembering the mistake of Israel's exclusivism in order to not repeat it.

### **Testimony for the Strangers Among Us**

Another passage of Scripture which shows the evangelization command to Israel is found in Exod 12. Stalnaker (2002) says, "The concept of proselytism originates in the Old Testament and is tied to the Hebrew word, *ger*, meaning a foreigner or sojourner. . . . This word '*ger*' is translated in the LXX as 'proselyte' " (p. 339). Some theologians have pointed to the experience of Israel in Egypt as strangers where they found themselves on the outside looking in. God made it clear to Israel that they were not to treat strangers as they have been treated. Israel was to set a new example of what it meant to be a neighbor.

### **My House Shall be a House of Prayer for all Nations**

Isaiah 56:7 provides another insight into the heart of God concerning His people and His Temple: God's Temple was to be open for all people, all nations and all races. Chinitz (2007) presents an argument about the universality of the call of God when he writes, "The Temple was not closed to anyone with pure heart and mind: For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (p. 250).

When speaking about God's house of prayer being for all people, Faussett (1871) comments,

. . . or rather, ‘peoples.’ No longer restricted to one favored people (Mal 1:11; Joh 4:21, 23; 1Ti 2:8). To be fully realized at the second coming (Isa 2:2-4). No longer literal, but spiritual sacrifice, namely, ‘prayer’ shall be offered (Isa 56:7).

I believe the Old Testament sanctuary worship was a time for families to come together, and in this way the youth and the young of Israel could see worship as an evangelization strategy.

### Evangelizing Youth in the New Testament

#### **Method: Discipleship, Baptism, Teaching, and Calling**

This invitation would propagate blessings for the entire world. “The prophecy that in Abraham all the families of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12:3) comes to fulfillment in the mission of the church” (Davies, 1997, p. 683).

#### **Prayer and Unity at Pentecost.**

Both prayer and unity were critical for receiving the promise of Jesus at Pentecost and growing as disciples. The apostles had seen how Jesus Himself relied on His heavenly father through daily prayer, and thus the early church was also to do so. “As Christ taught his disciples to pray (Lk 11:2), so Paul and the other disciples insisted on the need for prayer (1 Thes 5:17)” (Elwell, 1988a, p. 630).

#### **Jesus’ Counsel to Remain in Jerusalem.**

Jesus instructed His disciples to remain in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He knew that without this empowering their labor would be futile. Alexander (2000, p. 812) notes that Jesus anticipated the Holy Spirit’s activity in the testimony of the apostles and the church when He promised His disciples that the Spirit would testify

through and with them (John 15:26-27; Luke 24:48-49). And the call to evangelize was to both young and old. There is no doubt that young people figured significantly within the ranks of the new believers.

### **Paul's commitment**

The commitment in the life of Paul can be taken as a living example of what is possible when any believer surrenders to a life of biblical discipleship. Alexander (2000) says:

His encounter with the risen Christ led to a 'paradigm shift' in Paul's thinking: if Jesus was the crucified and exalted Messiah, the divine curse on him was 'for us', . . . Paul knew himself to be entrusted with God's 'mystery', the eschatological revelation that now Jews and Gentiles alike would be gathered together into one body, the church. (p. 666)

We can glimpse the life-changing impact of this new revelation on Paul: "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor 9:16). Because Paul's commitment to the Gospel was unequivocal, he did not shrink from its responsibility even in the face of death. Alexander points out that Paul's example of commitment is for all disciples: "A defining characteristic of witnesses is the willingness to confess Jesus Christ in the face of disbelief, opposition, persecution and even martyrdom" (2000, p. 813).

This kind of courage is characteristic of young people. There is a reason why our soldiers are typically between the ages of 18 to 20 years of age. Paul was unafraid of the cost of discipleship; instead, he was deathly afraid of not fulfilling his high calling. This is the kind of uncommon commitment rarely seen except in the ranks of fearless youth and young adults.

## **The Love of Christ Compels Us**

Paul also describes the impetus that moves the disciple of Jesus forward. “For the love of Christ compels us” (1 Cor 5:14). God has redeemed us, we in turn respond with obedience for the mission. David Bosch (2002) points out that “It is for the sake of its mission that the church has been elected, for the sake of its calling that it has been made ‘God’s own people’ ” (p. 493). The compulsion of the calling has nothing to do with a works-based salvation but rather it is a response of sacrificial love toward a loving God.

### The Concept of Permanence or Retention

#### **Discipline**

Biblical discipline is always redemptive in nature. The aim is to bring back into conformity to the life-giving principles of God. “Complementary to punitive discipline, positive discipline can be thought of as reinforcing discipline. God always disciplines; he does so punitively when necessary, but reinforcingly when possible” (Elwell, 1988a, p. 631). The aim of godly discipline is therefore to maintain us on the path of life. “The fruit of discipline is knowledge (Prv 12:1) and parents’ delight (Prv 29:17)” (Elwell, 1988, p. 631).

God, after all, as our heavenly father, is interested in maintaining his ideal relationship with us. “In Deuteronomy 8:5 the nature of God’s covenant discipline is made clear. It is not so much the discipline of a suzerain towards a vassal, as the discipline of a father towards his child” (Alexander, 2000, p. 448). It is clear that the Old Testament presents the family unit and the principle of discipline as a means of retention.

## Additional Analysis From Chapter 3

### Post Modernism's Impact

#### Complexity

Today's conceptual age is far from simple and very complex. For example, entitlement seems to be the order of the day—the belief that one need not work for anything because it is deserved regardless of the circumstances. One group of authors, in analyzing the maddening composition of today's youth culture—those who have grown up with helicopter parents, who've told their kids they can do anything—say, “We are ruled by the notion of we *can*, and so we *must*” (McGibbon, Vogel, & Williams, 2010, p. 196). Although their book does not represent a Christian worldview, they do bring up unanswered questions as to how reality clashes with false perceptions. The attitude they allude to seems to undergird the rampant “entitlement” seen among the youth of today.

One author suggests the answer may be to engage this generation in meaningful relationship, modeling biblical love, valuing each person's perspective, actively listening to their story, and connecting it to their real need of Jesus. We must engage like never before with the methodology preferred by Jesus. Sweet (2000) says that in Jesus' preferred form of communication He did not exegete words but rather images: “The kingdom of heaven is like” (p. 95). This may give us a glimpse into meeting the postmoderns on their terms.

Goetz (1997) shows that not all is bad in the new worldview of postmodernity when he posits,

Postmodernism has rightly shown us that all ideas, beliefs, and convictions about life—even science—do arise in a context. Postmodernism has stuck a needle in the



ballooned arrogance of the Enlightenment. Science and technology, we've learned, are not God. (p. 54)

This once again provides an opportunity to give direction for a contemporary discipleship. The Christian today can boldly present the belief that the principles of Christianity will ever be above any earthly philosophy or construct.

### **Deterioration of Values**

There has been a marked deterioration of values in society in the present age. One example of this by Jessica Bennett and Jesse Ellison (2010), secular authors for *Newsweek*, who clearly show contempt for any conservative values, compares the cultural shift away from traditional marriage over the last 50 years and ridicules the call for values when they say:

Fifty years ago we had Grace Kelly, resplendent and demure in her high-necked lace gown. Today it's Britney Spears in a custom-embroidered Juicy Couture tracksuit (and separated within a year, to nobody's surprise). So when conservatives argue that same-sex couples are going to 'destroy' the 'sanctity' of marriage we wonder, *wait*, didn't we already do that?

It's provocative to hear a perspective from a secular voice to show how far from the ideal we've come. Livingston and Cohn (2010) show that in 2008 41% of births were to unmarried mothers, up from 28% in 1990. This is a stark statistic to say the least. The impact of the ever-increasing number of single-parent homes may not be fully realized for some time to come.

## **Globalization**

This directly informs our discussion of the impact of globalization on contemporary discipleship. The views of these modern media moguls are to transform the world with more openness across cultural and international lines.

## **Global Ministry Perspectives**

The desire to reach the whole world for Jesus Christ is now a closer reality than ever before. The ability to reach every person on earth is certainly within reach in our lifetime. What will global ministry initiatives look like? What mediums and methods will emerge from this fresh reality?

## **Learning to Learn**

One author has likened the challenges we face in understanding today's culture by saying the "modern culture" required the equivalent of a road map to navigate a metropolis, while today's "postmodern culture" requires a guide who can trek safely through the jungle. The phrase "learning to learn" has been used by Michael J. Quicke (2009) to address the need for youth to ask new questions and discover the basis for why they believe what they believe (p. 170). Although speaking in a Baptist context, his concept is relevant also for us because we need to essentially learn a new way of learning in order to engage the postmodern and conceptual age. The same rules no longer apply for connecting people with the gospel story. Pink (2006) suggests that what we need in order to translate the message of the Gospel into something recognizable for today's Age of Conception are, ". . . creators and empathizers, pattern recognizers, and meaning makers . . . artists, story-tellers, caregivers, consolers, big picture thinkers" (p. 1).

## **Symptoms of Laodicea**

One symptom of Adventism's lack of focus can be seen in a recent post by Gencer (2010), a reporter for the Adventist News Network at the 59th session of the General Conference in Atlanta, Georgia who wrote a piece titled, "Empty Delegate Chairs Concern Church Leaders." In it he interviewed George Egwakhe, an associate treasurer of the General Conference, about the absence of nearly half of the over 2000 delegates from their post of duty during the business sessions. His response is startling; "Most of the delegates go shopping, trying to squeeze in purchases before they depart for their home countries. Don't be shocked; it's part of routine . . . it's not new." Granted, some of the delegates were in regional caucuses, and others may have had valid reasons for their absence, but for so many to blatantly disregard their assigned post is saddening. There is an underlying apathy that seems to be part of the general malaise present in the church today.

## **Additional Resources:**

*The Truth for Youth* (2002)

An initiative created by an evangelical organization Revival Fires International under the direction of Tim Todd, has created short comic book style tracts in order to challenge issues such as pornography, homosexuality, safe sex, abortion, rock music, school violence, evolution, drugs, and more. They have also produced *The Truth for Youth New Testament* which incorporates full-color comic themed illustrations in order to engage young minds ([www.thetruthforyouth.com](http://www.thetruthforyouth.com)). These resources have a very specific methodology intended to communicate biblical messages without triggering a gag reflex.

When Bible truths are presented in the form of a comic people may be more open to consider them.

Above The Influence (2010)

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign is a program of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. It may inform youth evangelism because it is a great example of a culturally and sociologically relevant tool in connecting with the current age. Today's youth gravitate toward cyber connections, and this tool provides a powerful resource as well as a model for youth discipleship. The website has many engaging polls and activities in order to challenge youth to think deeper and reflect on their views and question those areas where they may be receiving undue influence ([www.abovetheinfluence.com](http://www.abovetheinfluence.com)).

APPENDIX B

JESUS LOVES JEANS FORMS AND HANDOUTS

**Handout of Pray A P.R.A.I.S.E.**

Leader \_\_\_\_\_

**“PRAY A P-R-A-I-S-E”**

Intercessory Group # \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 55:17; Matt. 6:6, Matt. 26:41; Luke 21:36; 1 Thess. 5:17

©Ruber J. Leal 2008 RJLeal@satx.rr.com

Praise	Repent	Ask	Intercede	Silent (stand-still)	Expect
Psalm 150:6; Heb. 13:15	Psalm 66:18; Acts 3:19	Matt. 7:11; John 16: 24	Luke 6:28; 2Thess. 1:11	Psa. 46:10; Job 37:14; Isa. 30:21	Matt. 21:22; John 16:24 1John 3:22; Matt. 18:19 James 4:3 Why didn't get?
		Big Things:			
		Small Things:			
		Spiritual Things:			

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date Scheduled for prayer \_\_\_\_\_ Hour \_\_\_\_\_

## Committees and Responsibilities

### METROPOLITAN EVANGELISTIC MEETINGS JESUS LOVES JEANS HOUSTON MARCH 13-27, 2010.

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PR. JOSE ANTONIO PAGAN—SPANISH EVANGELIST

PR. KENDALL TURCIOS—ENGLISH EVANGELIST

**Invitation:** Composed of a select group who will contact all the members of the church and invite them to accept their role in the mission. The charge to the church members will be to invite their friends, neighbors, and family members to the evangelism meetings. If each member brings one visitor, our success will be guaranteed.

**Public Relations:** Will be responsible for all of the mass media information making the pertinent arrangements so the community will know about the event and be invited.

**Prayer Warriors:** Will meet half an hour before the beginning of the program to intercede on behalf of the visitors who will be attending. This is the time where the greatest conflicts arise. They will organize the members in groups and prayer chains to saturate the meetings with prayer every night. During the nightly presentations they will continue praying in groups and teams, especially during the final altar call! They will also ask the registration team for a nightly interest list to intercede for.

**Reception:** Composed of enthusiastic and an empathetic group of young men and women who are PUNCTUAL! They need to be there half an hour before the program begins to give an effervescent welcome and assist in accommodating visitors in the hall. Members of this committee need to dress modestly. They will give the first impression that someone receives about who we are. They will seat the people beginning from the front to the back. If someone asks to sit at the back they will be allowed to. They will also provide the exit in an orderly fashion.

**Registration:** Responsible for the registration of members and visitors on a nightly basis. They are responsible for putting together the names of the visitors for the nightly drawing. Once the list of visitors and members has been compiled a copy will be given to the evangelists, the director of the visitation committee, and the bible workers, the head of the ‘Telephone Committee, and the Prayer Warrior Team Leader.

**Platform:** Will work together with the evangelists and the local church pastor for the coordination and details of the program. He/She will be the official time keeper to make sure the program is running in a timely manner. Will be intimately involved with the evangelists for the development of the program.

**Music:** The JLJ team has a “Worship Leader” who is part of the team who will give the instructions for the worship hour. He will notify the platform committee who will be singing that night. He will also coordinate a small group of people to sing in a dynamic and inspirational way to prepare the minds of the people for the message of the Gospel using multimedia and instrumentation.

**Children’s Programming:** Is a very important committee who will work together with the children’s ministry of the local church, presenting a program fit for the minds of the children. The suggestion is that teams be organized rotationally so team members can share equally in the nightly meetings. The suggested ages for care are 3-9 year olds.

**Sound Technician:** This important committee will make sure the message and music come across clearly and audibly. Making sure all adjustments are precise. Making sure all cordless microphones have fresh batteries. They will make sure there is instrumental music playing a half hour before the program begins as well as at the end. They need to be in close contact with the music committee.



**Multimedia Technician:** Will work in close union with the evangelists and the video equipment for multimedia presentations. They must be there one hour before the meeting to ensure proper set up of all equipment.

**Decoration:** The 'JLJ' team will be in charge of this and make sure the appearance is nice. They will place the 'JLJ' banner and visual elements. ONCE THIS IS PUT IN PLACE IT WILL ONLY BE TAKEN DOWN AFTER THE SERIES IS OVER. All decorations will have the utmost sensitivity to be as unobtrusive as possible to not inconvenience the local church during their regular Sabbath morning service.

**Visitation:** Will be composed of bible workers, and lay volunteers who will visit the interests and gain their decisions for Jesus.

**Telephone Team:** A small group of ladies who will periodically call the young people who are visiting to express in a courteous way gratefulness for visiting and reminding them of the coming meetings.

**Security & Control:** Will be in charge of the security of the building and parking lot. Must work in an organized fashion with teams in such a way that not one individual misses out on the series. The majority to be made up of deacons and not

master guides or young people who need to be inside during the meetings as this series is specifically for this age group.

**Transportation**: It is very important that a select group of people be ready to give their cars in service for the transportation of any visitor who needs a ride. These persons will have a liaison to the telephone committee who will be keeping tabs on who needs transportation.

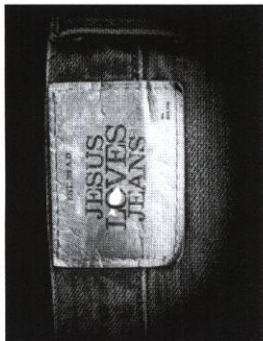
**Note**: A leader needs to be named for each of these committees, as well as a general superintendent who will have the accountability over all and report directly to the local church pastor as well as the evangelists.

## Jesus Loves Jeans Program Schedule

**Jesus Loves Jeans Evangelism**  
**Week 1: March 13 – March 19, 2010**  
 Houston International Seventh-day Adventist Church

Date	Saturday March 13	Sunday March 14	Monday March 15	Tuesday March 16	Wednesday March 17	Thursday March 18	Friday March 19
7:00 – 7:10 Staff Group Prayer	Lead: Ben Hernandez	Lead: Sean Sores	Lead: Carlos Monsalve	Lead: Karen Harris	Lead: Carlos Monsalve	Lead: Sean Sores	Lead: Karen Harris
7:15 – 7:20 5 minute Countdown	Video: Sparkle Countdown	Video: Times Up Countdown	Video: Church Names	Video: Sparkle Countdown	Video: Times Up Countdown	Video: Church Names	Video: Sparkle Countdown
7:20 – 7:30 Nooma Video	Video: Dust	Video: Luggage	Video: Store	Video: Flame	Video: Rain	Video: Noise	Video: Kickball
7:30 – 7:35 Welcome	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.
7:35 – 7:40 Prayer	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.
7:40 – 7:50 Special Music	Melaine Cabrales	Melaine Cabrales	Melaine Cabrales	Melaine Cabrales	Melaine Cabrales	Melaine Cabrales	Melaine Cabrales
7:50 – 8:00 Youth Testimony	Ben Hernandez	Ben Hernandez	Ben Hernandez	Ben Hernandez	Ben Hernandez	Ben Hernandez	Ben Hernandez
8:00 – 8:15 Praise & Worship Eddie Brown	Songs: 1. Trade. Sorrow 2. Open..eyes 3. Friend of God 4. This is...desire	Songs: 1. How Great... 2. Trade. Sorrow 3. Open..eyes 4. This is...desire	Songs: 1. Trade. Sorrow 2. Friend of God 3. How Great... 4. This is...desire	Songs: 1. Open..eyes 2. How Great... 3. Laying Sorrow 4. This is...desire	Songs: 1. Trade. Sorrow 2. How Great... 3. Friend of God 4. This is...desire	Songs: 1. How Great... 2. Trade. Sorrow 3. Open..eyes 4. This is...desire	Songs: 1. Trade.Sorrow 2. Open..eyes 3. Friend of God 4. This is...desire
8:15 – 8:50 Speaker	Topic/Jean: Worn - Out Pagan/Turcios	Topic/Jean: Torn Pagan/Turcios	Topic/Jean: Designer Pagan/Turcios	Topic/Jean: Daisy Duke Pagan/Turcios	Topic/Jean: White Pagan/Turcios	Topic/Jean: Eternal Pagan/Turcios	Topic/Jean: No Fear Pagan/Turcios
8:50 – 9:00 Call 2 Discipleship	Lead: Sean Sores	Lead: Sean Sores	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Carlos M.	Lead: Sean Sores	Lead: Sean Sores	Lead: Ben Hernandez
9:00 – 9:05 Raffle/Announcements							

# Jesus Loves Jesus Registration Form



Tag# \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Print)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Age (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us?: \_\_\_\_\_



Tag# \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Print)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Age (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us?: \_\_\_\_\_

## Rally Handout

# Training Seminar JESUS LOVES JEANS

PASTOR JOSE PAGAN  
(832) 661-4121  
PASTOR KENDALL TURCIOS  
(281) 236-9751  
PASTOR JOSUE MURILLO  
(817) 833-8130

August 18, 2007

Richardson English SDA

[www.jesuslovesjeans.com](http://www.jesuslovesjeans.com)

## Welcome to the Adventure of a Lifetime!

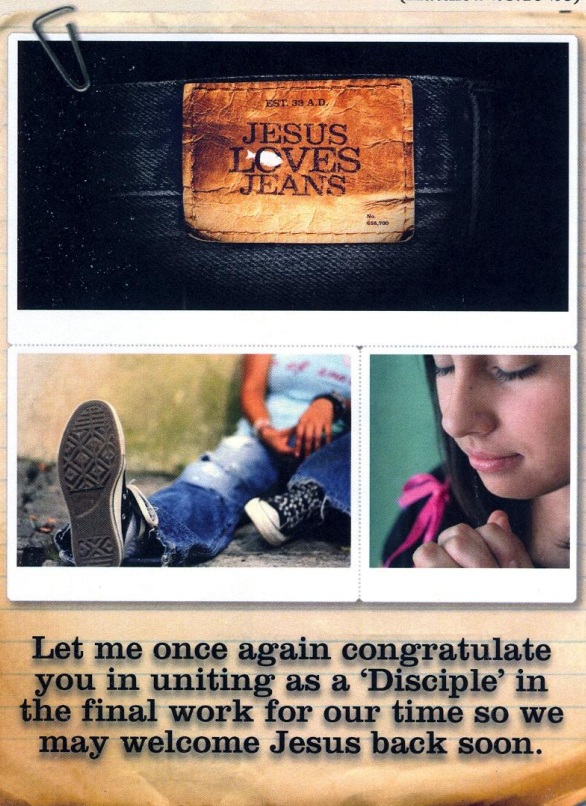
Today you are living out the dream! The dream that Jesus has for every young person living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century! His dream is for every young person, just like you, to lift high the victory torch of the Gospel for this time. Your friends need to hear the good news of Jesus' soon coming, and they need to hear it NOW!

As disciples of Jesus we know there is no time to waste. It's because of this that we invite you to unite with us, so this youth evangelism initiative "Jesus Loves Jeans," impacts your city in a powerful way.

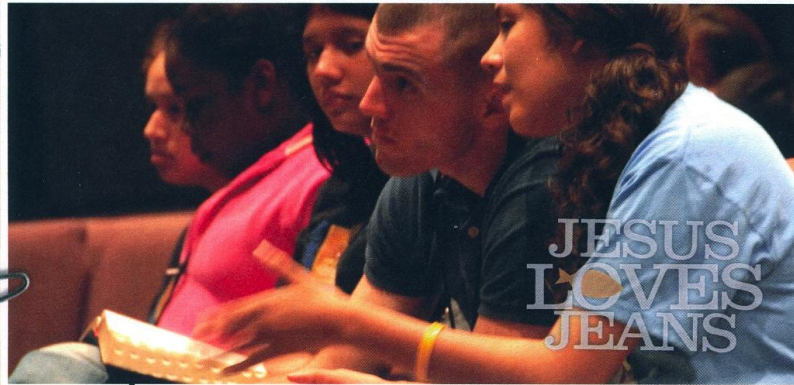
In the pages that follow you will receive some simple yet informative instructions helping you understand how simple "Jesus Loves Jeans" is to implement with your friends. Every detail is designed for you to get the word out as quickly as possible.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

(Matthew 28:19-20)



Let me once again congratulate you in uniting as a 'Disciple' in the final work for our time so we may welcome Jesus back soon.



**What Do I Do With This DVD?**

The most powerful tool in your arsenal of hope in sharing the message of Jesus is in your hands right now! You have in your hand a DVD with 14 bible presentations for you and your friends to go through in any forum, at any time, in any place, to help them make decisions for eternity.

**What you DON'T need!**

- \*Video projector
- \*Laptop

**What you DO need!**

- \*TV
- \*DVD player with remote

These presentations are bible based and allow you to ask the questions and go through the material with your friends. You can take 15 minutes to go through them or 2 hours. You set the pace. Navigate the DVD as you would any DVD menu!

- 1) Familiarize yourself with the questions and Bible passages.
- 2) Share the presentations with your friends. You are the teacher/Youth Evangelist!
- 3) Have a blast watching your friends impacted by the Holy Spirit.
- 4) Challenge them to accept Jesus and His teachings.

**THAT'S  
WHAT  
DISCIPLES  
OF JESUS  
DO!**

**FOLLOW  
JESUS  
AND  
INVITE  
OTHERS  
TO  
FOLLOW  
TOO!**

## How can I conduct my meetings?

# JESUS LOVES JEANS

### 1) Conduct your own evangelistic meetings.

\*In partnership with your local church and the support of your pastor you can conduct all 14 presentations in a church setting, social hall and be the Youth Evangelist.

### 2) Hold a week of prayer.

\*You can be the main speaker for a week of prayer where you share the DVD topics.

### 3) 14 Separate Youth Evangelists – One Presenter for Each Topic.

\*You and a group of your friends can get together and share the responsibility.

### 4) Small Group Meetings

\*Whether at home or at school, you can have an informal get-together with friends in front of a TV and share these bible presentations.

### 5) Youth AY Programs Sabbath Afternoon (visitors are especially invited).

\*You can coordinate with your youth department to have these presentations to a group of visitors.



## My Friends List

Your friends are at the core of your life. You love them and live with them as such a huge part of your life – you must tell them about Jesus. Every single one of your friends needs to know that Jesus loves them and wants to have a close and intimate friendship with them. Your friends need to know that Jesus is coming soon to take his children home, every person who has made a saving commitment to Him. In the space provided compile a list of your friends according to the categories provided.

Write the names and phone numbers of 4 friends who are on your cell phone contact list:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Write the names and phone numbers of 5 friends from your “My Space” or “Facebook” site:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Write the names and phone numbers of 3 friends from school:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Write the names and phone numbers of 3 friends from your neighborhood:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

From today on, begin to **pray** for the friends and loved ones on your list. **Pray** and **INVITE** them to come to the meetings you and your friends will begin to have using the “Jesus Loves Jeans” DVD. Pray also to invite them to the area-wide evangelistic meetings Sat. November 10 – Sat. Nov. 17, 2007.

Remember a true friend **ALWAYS** worries about your salvation!

## Critical Dates List

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| *August 18   | Youth Rally – Richardson Church  |
| *August 25   | Preparation for each ‘Youth Evangelist’ to begin inviting friends from their list to their meetings/get-togethers.                               |
| *September 8 | Youth meetings begin (home/school/small groups/church function – 14 presentations on DVD) all in preparation for November 3-17 reaping meetings. |
| *November 3  | Dallas Metro-Plex Area Meetings Begin. <b>(SPANISH)</b><br>Sat. November 3 – Fri. November 9<br><b>Evangelist: Jose A. Pagan</b>                 |
| *November 17 | Dallas Metro-Plex Area Meetings Begin. <b>(ENGLISH)</b><br>Sat. November 10 – Sat. November 17<br><b>Evangelist: Kendall Turcios</b>             |





# My Commitment

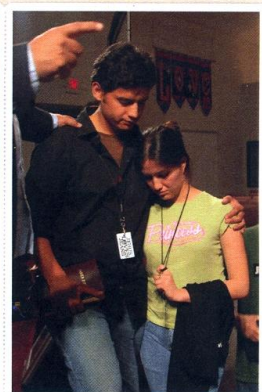
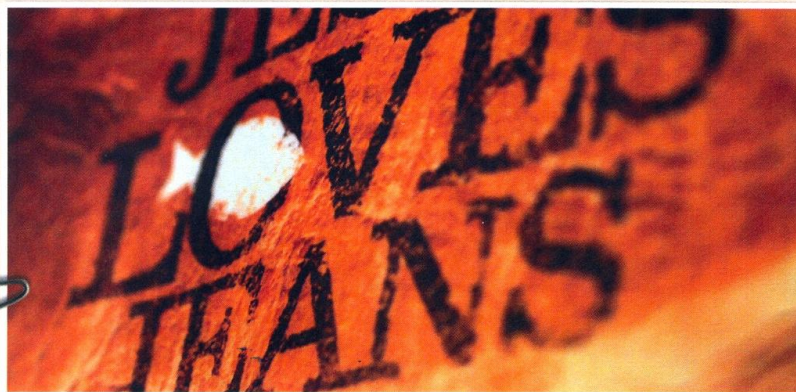
With God's help and Holy Spirit by my side, I commit to being a part of the blessing and revival coming to our city.

- \* Praying daily.
- \* Inviting my friends.
- \* Proclaiming the Message.
- \* Challenging others to accept Jesus.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth Evangelist



## APPENDIX C

### JESUS LOVES JEANS RESOURCES

#### Jesus Loves Jeans Ice Breaker Cards



Front and back of 4 of 62 Cards.

## Jesus Loves Jeans Ice Breaker Questions

1. What role should a Christian play in politics?  
Can a Christian be a successful politician? If so why or why not?
2. Have you ever heard or seen God? If so what was it like? If not, what do you think of people who say they have?  
If you could ask God any question what would it be and why?
3. If this was the last day of your life what would you do?  
How many years do you expect to live? How come?
4. What's the biggest reason to be a disciple of Jesus?  
Would you rather be a disciple of Jesus today, or long ago when Jesus walked the Earth? Why?
5. Can anyone be sure they're going to heaven? Why or why not?  
If you were God, what would be your criteria for letting people in?
6. Some people say if you commit suicide you won't go to heaven. What do you think?  
If you 'curse' while driving off a cliff and die without time to repent will you go to heaven? Why or why not?
7. What's harder: going out in a blaze of glory for Jesus, or living a righteous life one day at a time for 50 years?  
Millions of Christians face persecution daily in other countries. How is your faith like theirs? How is it not?
8. Are 'churchy' people hypocrites? Why or why not?  
Is there something about your life right now that is hypocritical?
9. What is the most frustrating thing about your parents?  
What are you definitely going to do differently when you have kids?

10. If you go to church, do you go because you want to or because you have to? Explain.
- Should parents force their kids to go to church, play in sports, or learn music? Why?
11. Are there any similarities between Bible characters and fictional 'super heroes'? If so what are they?
- Which Bible character would you like to have been and why?
12. What does it mean to be a true friend?
- Have you ever been betrayed by a 'friend'? If so, is it worth trusting someone again? Why?
13. In what ways are you still like a kid? Which of these would you like to keep?
- In what ways are you no longer like a kid? Which of these would you like to get back?
14. Is it easier to die for Jesus or live for Jesus?
- Who inspires you most, someone who died for Jesus or someone who lived for Jesus? Why?
15. The Bible says Jesus ate and drank with sinners. What's wrong with doing the same today? Explain.
- Can a Christian go to a party where there is alcohol and drugs available? Why?
16. How is it harder for you to be a Christian today, than it was for people living 50 years ago?
- Has society become better or worse? Explain.
17. If a friend told you they were thinking of committing suicide would you tell someone? Why?
- What kind of secret would you take to the grave? Explain
18. Can you tell if someone is a Christian by the way they dress?
- Do you think Christians should dress a certain way? If so, in what way and why?

19. Is it easy for you to talk with your family and friends about God? Why?  
What is an effective way for you to share God with your family and friends? Explain.
20. What are some of the dangers of premarital sex? List at least three.  
Is it right for two people to have sex as long as they love each other even though they are not married? Explain.
21. Does it matter which religion you belong to?  
Why are there so many world religions?
22. If someone has 'fashion sense' does it make them unspiritual? Why or why not?  
Is God interested in how you dress? Explain.
23. What are you willing to live for?  
What are you willing to die for?
24. If you had the power, would you end world hunger or find the cure for AIDS? Why?  
If God can do anything, why hasn't he put an end to Suffering? Explain.
25. Is there such a thing as 'evil' music? If so what makes it 'evil' the style, lyrics, or the singer?  
How does the 'lifestyle' of a singer or music group influence those who listen to the music? Explain.

26. Is there something you can think of that's definitely WRONG no matter who you are or where you live?
- Is there something you can think of that's definitely RIGHT no matter who you are or where you live?
27. Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. Does this mean that non-Christians won't go to heaven? Explain.
- Do you think God prefers a sincere Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or an insincere Christian? Explain.
28. Would you rather live a long life of poverty or one year as a multi-millionaire? Explain.
- What is something you would never do for any amount of money? Explain.
29. Is it ok to lie in order to save someone's life? Explain.
- Is it ok to take a life in order to save another one? Explain.
30. Does God really answer our prayers? If so, share an answered prayer, if not why do you think He doesn't?
- Describe your mental picture of God when you pray? What does he look like to you?
31. The costumes for your school play are very revealing. Would you still participate? Why?
- You've been invited to a party by someone you really like and find them drinking beer. What would you do?
32. You're stopped for speeding. Do you tell the cop your dad's a cop to try and get off with a warning? Why?
- Your mom is the school principal. Should you get preferential treatment? Why?
33. Why do adults tend to aggravate teens? List some ways.
- Why is it so difficult for teens to communicate with adults? List some reasons.

34. Someone at your school is HIV positive and everyone avoids them. What do you do?

There is a well-known drug addict at school. You realize he needs help. What do you do?

35. While visiting a friend you accidentally break his DVD player. Do you tell him?

While babysitting a rich family you accidentally drop and break their laptop. Do you confess or hope they blame it on one of their kids?

36. Your friend often tells dirty and racist jokes. You tell him to stop but he won't. What do you do?

Your friend is bullying a younger kid. What do you do or say?

37. Who is to blame when you do something wrong? Your parents, peer pressure, God, Satan . . . nobody?

Who should take the credit when you do something right?

38. What are your best childhood memories?

What has God given you recently to make you happy?

39. Which is worse, DOING things we shouldn't or NOT DOING things we should?

Which is better, DOING things we should or NOT DOING things we shouldn't?

40. Why are you popular? What do you admire in other people?

What advice would you give to someone who wants more friends?

41. Why do you think Jesus hasn't returned yet?

If you knew Jesus was coming in one week. What would you do different over the next few days?

42. Share three things your parents do very well.

What three suggestions would you give any parent?

43. Do you learn more by facts or feelings? Is there a balance between them?  
Which would you prefer: to know more about God or have a stronger passion for Him? Why?
44. What do you do when you feel guilty?  
What do your friends typically do when they feel guilty?
45. Why do people join cults?  
What would you do to help a friend that is involved in a cult?
46. How much money would cover all your needs? Why?  
At what point in your life have you felt most satisfied?
47. List your 3 most important needs.  
What are your priorities in life? What are you willing to sacrifice in order to achieve them?
48. Name the three people you trust the most right now. Why?  
What is it about you that helps others trust you?
49. One of your friends is angry at you and you don't know why. What do you do?  
What's the best thing a friend has ever done for you?
50. What would you do if you find out your friend's 'love interest' is cheating on them?  
Are there any limits to privacy? If so, what are they?
51. An annoying friend calls you daily. Do you tell your parents to say your not home? Why?  
When is it OK to lie?
52. You're 20 pounds overweight. Your 'love interest' tells you to lose weight or they'll break up with you. What would you do?  
What is more important to you, inner or outer beauty?



53. What does it take for us to change our bad habits?  
How important is it to change your character in order to attract people?
54. What do you do when you find something in the Bible you don't understand?  
What do you do when you find something in the Bible that God wants you to do but you don't want to do it?
55. Is it better to die a slow death or to have a "doctor assisted suicide"? Why?  
What is the difference between committing suicide and living an unhealthy lifestyle?
56. Your parents don't like the person you're dating. Would you lie to them about your relationship?  
What factors do you consider in starting a relationship?
57. Do you give money to a homeless person although it is possible they'll use it for drugs or alcohol?  
Your brother asks for a loan so he can repay a large debt. You know he's got a gambling problem. Do you loan it to him? Why?
58. Which are worse, using drugs or having unclean thoughts?  
Are some sins "bigger" than others?
59. Why do bad things happen to good people?  
What determines if someone is good or bad?
60. In your opinion, what is wrong with watching porn?  
What advice would you give to someone that knows they're addicted to porn and wants to stop?
61. Wild card  
You pick who has to answer the next question!
62. Instructions  
Each card has two separate questions with a similar theme.  
Your friends can:

Participants are given four choices with what they can do with the card they are given.

1. Choose which question they will answer.
2. Answer the first question and then pick someone to answer the second.
3. Flip a coin to decide which question to answer.
4. Ask two people to answer the same question and compare their answers.

## **Jesus Loves Jeans Witnessing Book**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To Jesus Christ my Savior. You are the only one worthy of praise. I can't put into words the awe I feel in having been called by You to be a disciple. Your love has inspired the writing of this book.

To Ivette. For being my constant companion and helper. You share all my dreams as we walk side by side. I love you. To my children; José Emmanuel and José Gabriel. For the joy and abundance you bring to each and every day of my life.

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To Aldo Murillo. You have a heaven sent gift to visually communicate the truths of the Gospel. The design for this project could not be in better hands.

To Pastor Pedro Guzman. I haven't forgotten you! We began this adventure together for God's honor and glory. When we get to heaven we'll be able to see what God has done through our humble efforts.

To all . . . who have in some way or another contributed to this vision, you know who you are. You will forever be in my heart.

To every young person who has ever fearlessly shared Jesus. Press on with the joy, energy, and conviction of knowing we will soon share eternity with Jesus.

Sincerely,  
Pastor José Antonio Pagán

### **INTRODUCTION**

One day while on a long flight I found myself looking for some good reading material to pass the time. I found a magazine in the storage pocket in front of me and came across an article which immediately grabbed my attention.

The article was entitled: "Jeans Uniformed the World." As I read through the article I learned a great deal of the history of Jeans and their varied use over the decades leading to our time. I was surprised to learn that most every young person has at least one pair of jeans and that young people have truly come to be identified by their use worldwide.

Suddenly a thought came to me making my heart jump: There is a direct relationship between young people and jeans! In the same way there are different kinds of jeans there are also different lifestyles young people are living describing those circumstances.

There are torn jeans, worn out jeans, dirty jeans, 'Daisy Duke' jeans, expensive jeans, etc. . . . In the same way every jean has a story; we too each have a unique story. In the following chapters we will go on a journey together discovering the reality that Jesus Loves Jeans. You will begin to realize that Jesus is not interested merely in denim material, but he loves you.

He loves you simply because you are young. He desires to show you his mercy by healing all of your wounds and completely transforming your life. Follow me as we look at different kinds of jeans that experienced the greatest love ever.

Jesus is the Savior of young people just like YOU!

## CHAPTER 1: A WORN-OUT JEAN

In case you missed it, jeans are the official youth outfit. In so many ways they represent us and we have come to be identified by them. Have you noticed though that there are so many different styles and types of jeans? As varied as they are each style has a unique characteristic we can learn from.

Imagine for a moment that you are walking into the mall, you have \$35.00 in your pocket and your only objective is to come out of there with one, maybe two pairs of jeans for your first semester of the new school year. These are going to be the jeans that you will use during the next four months, maybe from August to December. All things being equal, you'll probably be wearing them one hundred and nine times! This of course considering that you study from eight in the morning to three in the afternoon; we're talking about approximately seven hundred and seventy-three hours of use just for the first part of the school year!

But what if you keep them on for three additional hours when you come back home until the time you are ready to take a shower? That would, of course, add to the hours of wear and tear.

Can you imagine what these jeans will look like by Christmas? If they don't have gaping holes in them, how worn-out will your jeans be by then? They may have faded, stretched, shrunk, stunk, and have patches everywhere; we're talking WORN OUT!

Just like these jeans, there are many young people today who are tired and exhausted without any idea where they're heading. Many of them have no goals or even a desire to enjoy life anymore. There are many reasons that cause us to grow tired. Maybe you're going through a tough time at home and having a hard time getting along with your

parents. Maybe you're having a problem with a brother or sister and your grades at school are not getting any better. Maybe it's not one of these issues, but a whole lot of them together snowballing at you.

Anybody would get tired of living in this type of situation. If this has been your experience, if this is your problem, so much so that you don't even want to live any longer, I want to introduce you to a man that loves your 'worn-out jeans' and cares deeply how you feel. His name is JESUS.

The story is told of a blind man who for many years begged for a living on the side of the road. I don't know how you would feel if you spent the same amount of time that you currently spend in school, begging for money by the roadside near your home. That is exactly what this man used to do.

In Mark 10:46-52 we find the story of a blind man by the name of Bartimaeus.

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him. The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see." "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road (Mark 10:46 NIV).

According to the Bible, the only identifying characteristic was his family affiliation. The bible says he was the son of Timaeus. This man spent his life begging for a living; asking people for what they had left over so he could eat and pay his expenses. One day he heard a commotion of people and a name jumped out at him from the throng. Jesus, it was the famous Jesus the one who could heal people! He could pick out that the crowd was passing him by and he would possibly soon lose his only opportunity to be healed. In desperation he began to shout: "Jesus! Son of David! Have mercy on me!"

Now, consider with me if you will. Imagine how this man spent every day of his life yelling and shouting. I imagine that as he went about begging his voice became hoarse over time, its strength must've begun to wane, it may have even become less and less audible due to so many years of yelling and shouting as he begged for money. This was his style and he used it to call Jesus' attention [verse 48 says he shouted] trying with all his might to be heard. It shows how tired, exhausted, and at the same time, how desperate he was to receive someone's help.

This man screamed and shouted because he did not want to continue living in misery! He shouted to get Jesus' attention to free him from his terrible situation. He shouted with all his strength so that Jesus would hear him above the bedlam of noise surrounding the Master. Have you ever felt like this? Have you felt the fatigue of facing a problem with no solution? It seems like your soul is yelling, shouting, and screaming for someone to hear you and help.

You would imagine the people around Bartimaeus would be helpful seeing him trying to reach out for help. Of course everyone around him was so helpful. Someone may have said, 'Oh, you want Jesus, one moment while I get his attention.' Do you think that's what they did? No! The bible says that the people around Bartimaeus told him to shut up! Zip it! Put a cork in it! Be quiet old fool. You're being a nuisance. How dare you disturb our celebration and party with your nonsense? But Bart was too tired and exhausted to give up. He shouted all the more and the bible says that Jesus heard him and sent for him.

They found him and told him:

"Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus (vs. 50).

And then Jesus asked him the million-dollar question:

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him (vs. 51).

Can you imagine how many things went through the mind of Bartimaeus? He couldn't physically see the face of the one talking to him, but the eyes of his soul could see the man who could heal him. He saw him as his only way out from the miserable life he lived—the life of a "worn-out jean"—a life of struggles, problems and countless other circumstances that had driven him to living the life of a beggar.

Maybe this sounds like your life. Maybe your life right now is like a worn-out jean filled with problems and struggles, so much so, that you feel a beggar. If this sounds like your experience, listen to the voice in the pages of this book, that Jesus loves you even though your jeans are worn out. Jesus came to Bartimaeus and asked him:

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him (vs. 51).

Today he is asking you the same question; what do you want me to do for you? Why don't you tell him you want a new pair of jeans? Tell him right now in prayer, 'Lord give me strength to carry on, give me the joy I once had—the happiness in knowing that my jeans are brand new.

Bartimaeus asked Jesus to give him his sight and immediately he received his sight. You need to have the same assurance! Jesus knows you need a new life. He knows your life is worn out and tired. What's more, He's willing and able to give it to you. Don't ever think

that Jesus is so busy he can't hear you. Just ask him to change your worn-out hopeless life, filled with problems and pain, into a new life of joy and peace. Tell Jesus what you need right now. The Word of God is a treasure chest of promises to inspire us. One of those powerful passages of hope is:

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak” (Isaiah 40:29).

When you ask Jesus to work his miracle in your life He will.

THANK YOU JESUS FOR TRANSFORMING  
MY WORN-OUT JEAN INTO A NEW ONE!

## CHAPTER 2: A TORN JEAN

On a certain occasion, while camping in a beautiful locale, our camp leader gave instructions that we were to hike through the woods. We planned to be out and about in God's nature for about three hours so we got ourselves geared up and dressed appropriately. We prayed for safety, but prepared for any eventuality. It seemed we had walked for only a few minutes when disaster struck. A young man who had been walking along a steep part of the path suddenly slipped and began to tumble down a steep ravine. He finally came to an abrupt stop crashing into some very thick foliage. Everyone stood paralyzed with the shock of what had just happened. At that moment no one had the desire to laugh at our partner's misfortune, things were much to grave for that. We were truly surprised to say the least.

The young man lay with his jeans tattered, torn and covered in blood! His skin had been pierced on the way down with the jagged surfaces of the ground around him. His injuries were so severe that it took stitches to sew him back up. He had lost his jeans. He had lost some skin and blood. And now this young person found himself to be largely immobilized.

Has something like this ever happened to you? Have you ever found yourself in a situation like this? If you have I pray it wasn't as serious as this. The truth is in more ways than one many young people find themselves experiencing some of the shock, pain and hardship this young man faced. Why is it that young people experience pain in life? Why is it that even in their adult lives many people carry the scars of the pain and suffering of their youth? Could it be that youth can truly be characterized by problems, crisis, and trauma?

It's not only the general problems in life that affect us. There are always more serious issues, deeper darker issues in life, the kind of traumas that mark us forever! Maybe you have seen the broken pieces that are left in the life of a young person who has been physically or sexually abused. Maybe you have encountered the tattered and torn

existence of someone who has been the victim of rape or incest. Maybe you've seen the shattered dreams of a friend whose life has been affected by the divorce of their parents, or their untimely death.

It's no wonder how sometimes sex, drugs and alcohol seem like the only methods' powerful enough to numb the pain of our experience. Maybe you have seen the way the enemy of souls takes captive into his vice grip those of us who wear jeans.

We're talking about a young person who is essentially a 'torn-jean.' A young person like this is he who from a very early age walks alone in a world full of people. As life passes by at the speed of light some young people find themselves lost in a tragic time warp. The tragic episode of the young man who was hiking in the woods, is emblematic of how any young persons' jeans can be torn and their life immobilized in a moment.

Maybe your story has been one of tragedy and pain. If this is the case you need to know that Jesus is searching for you. He wants to take your torn up tattered jeans and exchange them for new ones.

Jesus is a master problem solver, he knows how you feel, he knows your circumstances; and what's even more important, he has a powerful solution so that you will never again have to experience that pain again. Jesus is in love with you!

He loves you just as you are; he desires to transform you, that's his greatest desire. He wants to take your life—a torn jean—and transform it.

One of the most amazing bible stories is about ten lepers who had been cast aside by society. They had been forced to leave everything and everyone they liked and loved and live in solitude away from everyone. Their homes became the undesirable places of the wilderness. Many times they had to take shelter in caves and leper communes. They felt dirty, ashamed and under the curse of God. No one wanted to be near them for fear of being contaminated. Leprosy was the only certainty in their life, that and death. Notice what the bible says happened when Jesus came into their lives.

As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."  
(Luke 17:12-19).

Jesus completely changed those lives of torn jeans into lives that were now clean, beautiful, and filled with joy. Yet even though he changed the lives of 10 men, only one



came to give him thanks. Today he wants to do the same for you if you will only ask for his mercy.

If you pray to him and say, 'Jesus, have mercy on me,' he will!

But as soon as he cleans and mends your torn jean making them new, be thankful, decide to live at his feet, don't continue to run through life without stopping to say thank you to the One who loves you and made you whole again.

Today is a chance to tell Jesus, 'Thank you for so much love, for your renovating grace, for doing for me what no one else could do. Today I am coming back to say thank you. Were it not for your grace, my jeans would still be torn.' When others ask me how I now live, I will tell them Jesus changed me, only he could have done it.

Jesus has a plan already made for the young person who gives whatever strength he has left over to him. He will restore him.

“. . . though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand" (Psalm 37:24).

Claim this promise and never forget Jesus is ready to sew your torn jean, protect you from tearing it again, and give you reason to share his love with others.

Jesus will be with you wherever you are. Notice what the bible says:

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and people in exchange for your life. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.” (Isaiah 43:2-5)

Does this passage tell you something about God's love for you?

The young man who fell while hiking did something very important. He allowed the leader to take control of the situation. You must do the same thing today so that Jesus can help you. The bible says:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Notice what else the bible says:

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the Gospel of God? And, ‘If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?’ So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good” (1 Peter 4:12-5:1).

THANK YOU JESUS FOR TAKING MY TORN JEAN  
AND TURNING IT INTO A NEW ONE  
DEDICATED UNTO YOU!

CHAPTER 3: A ‘DAISY DUKE’ JEAN

I’m sure by now you are imagining who different styles of jeans truly represent the lives of young people. No doubt these styles represent ways in which young people have been living lives separated from their Master and Lord. There’s another style of jean that is far more dangerous than the ones previously mentioned. It’s the life of the ‘daisy duke’ jean.

To some this may seem like the life of privilege and excitement, but the truth is far graver than that. Take a look at some of these facts.

- By the age of 19, 80% of the young men and 67% of the young women have had sexual relations.
- Every year over one million teenage girls become pregnant.
- There are approximately 500,000 abortions every year. Of these 1/3 are among adolescents.
- More than 50 % of the 21 million teens between the ages of 15 and 19 are sexually active.

(The Young People Speak: Josh McDowell, page. 14).

Looking at these statistics it’s no wonder that the ‘daisy duke’ jean is truly a high risk lifestyle. Young people who share this experience are truly in danger of ruining their lives forever. As you hear this you need to remember that Jesus loves young people even though they may be sexually active. Jesus loves you in spite of all your sins, including those of sexual immorality. Sexual relations outside of the protection of marriage does not eliminate God’s love for you.

The heart of Jesus is broken every time he considers one of his children living and suffering as a 'daisy duke' jean. Any time a young man defiles himself by having sexual relations outside of marriage Jesus' heart is torn. Every time a young woman gives herself to someone else sexually without being protected by the safety of marriage, Jesus' heart is torn. He doesn't love you any less, but his heart breaks to see you bring such pain and suffering into your life. As a parent cries for the pain of his child, Jesus cries for you. The forces of evil in this world have designed every imaginable way to destroy your integrity, your honor, your purity, in the hopes of destroying God's pure and perfect image in your life. Many young people have gone down this path of temporary pleasure only to find at the end there is only heartache, suffering, guilt and shame.

Stop for a moment to consider what you are truly worth. How much do you think you are worth to God? How special do you imagine you are in his eyes? The bible says you have been created in a masterful and unique way. You are the only one of your kind. That is truly how Jesus sees you. Maybe you have fallen into the devil's trap of sexual immorality. Maybe you have a 'daisy duke' jean hanging in the back of your closet. If this is the case, you need to know, if you confess your sins, Jesus can forgive you. His invitation for you is:

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”(Matthew 4:17)

If you decide to change the path of your life Jesus will help you to find the path of truth. Some young people are deceived into thinking that a 'daisy duke' jean is necessary to be popular and successful. Nothing could be further from the truth. A 'daisy duke' jean is a sure path to destruction and death.

Our society has many ways in which it presents the 'daisy duke' lifestyle as fun and enjoyable. One young lady who fell in this trap tells a totally different story. She came to me during a church youth camp. She confessed that she had always dreamed about her first sexual experience as being a highly romantic and unforgettable moment. But what happened was far from the 'fairy tale' experience of Hollywood. Instead of feeling good about the sexual encounter she was plagued by guilt and shame of the worst kind. She fell so low she even contemplated suicide.

Many think, “Well, if I use a condom . . . ,” but what about the guilt and the rejection that follows? So far a contraceptive that protects you from guilt and shame hasn't been invented! Shame can drain your life slowly a little at a time until there is nothing left. But the forgiveness of Jesus can cleanse you and give you a new life no matter what your sin.

The greatest desire of Jesus is that you have a life full of success, a life that shines and glistens with the purity of self-respect, respect for others. He wants you to have a life with no regrets. A 'daisy duke' life can only bring pain and suffering. If this lifestyle describes you, remember Jesus loves you and surrendered his life for you on the cross of Calvary. Turn your life over to him, he can change you. Notice what the bible says:

“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” (2 Timothy 2:22)

Even if you have made a mistake you can still correct it. Walk toward Jesus not away from him. Embrace the wonderful life he has for you.

The bible talks about a woman who lived a ‘Daisy Duke’ life. You may know who it is, the bible describes her story like this:

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” (John 8:3-11)

When Mary of Magdala met Jesus he forgave her. He did not accept her conduct, he didn’t accept her sin, but he loved her. I’m sure you’ve heard that Jesus loves sinners yet hates sin. The words:

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” (vs. 11)

If you are living the life of a ‘daisy duke’ Jesus says the same thing to you. Jesus doesn’t condemn you either and he also invites you to go and sin no more.

“Neither do I condemn you . . .” this is the first healing phrase that you will hear from Jesus’ lips. This shows you that even though others condemn you, he won’t even though he does have the right to execute judgment.

His invitation to ‘sin no more’ is the part that invites you to continue living your life of healing. Once Jesus has healed you, freedom is yours, there’s no need to return to the sin that destroyed you before. Jesus will become the new love of your life.

JESUS THANK YOU, I KNOW YOU UNDERSTAND ME  
AND ARE SPEAKING TO MY HEART.  
I WANT A CLEAN JEAN!

## CHAPTER 4: AN EXPENSIVE JEAN

For years Levis ruled the market. No one else even came close to matching the sales and profits of their popular jeans. Over time however the market began to include some very different brands and the specialization of the jean market was born. Today there are designer jeans of all types that not only surpass Levi's in popularity but also command a very hefty price tag. These are the designer jeans!

Now designer jeans can range anywhere between \$60.00 to over \$100.00 for only one pair. You can go to any local mall and find there are stores who flaunt their own designer brand name and people flock to them in order to have the latest fashion. You'll find more than jeans in these stores. They're stocked with shirts, socks, shoes, and all sorts of accessories that many people are more than happy to buy. There's one thing that is important when shopping designer jeans, and that's money! You have to make sure you get the best value for your dollar so choose wisely.

For those people who make the decision to fork over big bucks to have these designer jeans there are two things to keep in mind. First of all, there are young people who have more than enough money and they have no problem in putting down the cash required to have them. But secondly there are other young people who sacrifice many other needs in order to have the most popular attractive apparel. The price of being considered one of the 'in crowd' is high.

Interestingly enough, as time goes by the jeans they once bought at such a high price are not in style anymore. There always seems to be another style that is also a 'must have.' The cycle naturally repeats itself. It's important to reflect on where this type of activity will lead young people.

There may be a time in your life when you found yourself trying to be something you are not. I've run across many young people who value, clothing, cars, jobs, homes, and hangouts above anything else in life. I've met others who are embarrassed of where they live, their dad's car is multi-colored and full of dents and scratches, and they are embarrassed by it. Maybe their older brother works as a cashier in a supermarket instead of being in management? All of these elements may lead young people to be ashamed of who they are.

Take a moment to think about this reality. What's more important; clothing or what lies inside the clothing? What truly means more; our title or the sincerity we possess? Do you think it's necessary to be rich to be considered a success? Will wearing an expensive jean really make me happier than wearing an ordinary one?

There maybe hundreds of thousands of young people who right now are unhappy with what they do have, because they are constantly thinking about what they don't have. Instead of being content with what they already have they live a miserable life because of

what they don't have. Some believe they'd be truly happy if only they owned a hot new Porsche, or lived in a downtown multi-million dollar penthouse,

The bible tells us that being rich and wealthy is not sinful or wrong. What the bible does warn us against is the danger that lies in placing our trust in our riches and wealth instead of on Jesus. The following bible passages may be helpful to you.

“Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.” (Psalm 62:10)

“Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.” (Proverbs 11:28)

“A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.” (Proverbs 22:1)

By now you have realized that God sees young people and the different lifestyles they take on by the different kinds of jeans they choose to use; and you've seen that no matter where they are God can change their life around.

There is one young man in the bible that stands out as a young man who had life pretty much figured out. If this young man had lived in our day and age he would probably have worn the most expensive designer jeans available. He had a high social status, and a position of great influence. The bible mentions him in Mark 10:17-22:

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’ ” “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. (Mark 10:17-22)

Can you imagine that? The bible says the young man went away sad because he had a lot of things. The things of this world came easy to him. He must have lived a life of plenty and a life full of all the things the world pursues. Yet even in the middle of the comfort and wealth, the news of the young rabbi from Nazareth reached his ears.

His heart yearned to meet with Jesus face to face. He had heard how Jesus healed the sick, brought forgiveness to sinner's lives, and restored people with love and understanding. The Scriptures say that when he saw him he ran and asked him a question that showed the sincerity of wanting to know how to get to heaven.

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (vs. 17)

This young man came to the originator of all life to ask the question of the century. Notice Jesus’ specific response.

“You know the commandments . . .” (vs. 19)

It’s interesting that Jesus immediately responds by telling him he needs to keep the commandments. To make sure he is understood he begins to list several of them. When the young man hears this no doubt his heart was filled with hope and joy. He began to think of all the effort he has put into following the letter of God’s law. He has for years now, since being even younger, taking the time and effort to make sure he kept the details in the law of God.

As Jesus contemplates this young man the bible says that love welled up in the heart of God. The heart of God is nothing but love, but somehow as he looks to this young man his heart overflows with love. It was this complete love that left him no other option than to correct this young man’s tragic course. Jesus looked him in the eye and told him there was only one more thing he needed.

Now there may be someone out there who thinks that Jesus loves them based on what they have. Maybe there is a young person who has enjoyed a life of ease and riches who thinks because heaven has an abundance of gold and silver that Jesus feels more comfortable around those with money. Jesus must love me because of the clothes I wear, the places I vacation, or the private school I attend. Maybe a young person feels that they have the special favor of God because of all of their material possessions. If somehow you have come to feel this way, you need to know that nothing could be further from the truth! Jesus does not care about how much you have; your bank account, your social status, or the car you drive. Salvation cannot be bought it can only be received as a free gift.

The blood of Jesus is the only thing that can pay the full price of salvation. The only way for you to receive this gift is by accepting it freely from him. It doesn’t matter whether you are rich or poor, educated or uneducated; Jesus shows no partiality. All you need to do is repent of your sins and accept Jesus as your savior. It’s not what you have that qualifies you for heaven; it’s only in recognizing that you need a savior. Jesus, only Jesus!

Jesus told this young man, he only needed one thing. Can you imagine that? He could’ve made a long list of all the things lacking in that young man’s life, but he only mentioned the most important thing that was lacking. Just to make sure the young man understood, he told him to sell it all. Put up all of your possessions at a ‘garage sale’ and then take the proceeds and give it to the poor. What must’ve gone through that young man’s mind? What could he have possibly been thinking? Jesus wanted him to give up everything he felt was valuable and only keep Jesus. The truth is that only Jesus has infinite value. He is

truly the 'pearl of great price' the bible talks about. If you still have something that is worth more to you than Jesus, then you need to give it up. You can't have both in your life and have Jesus be the most important. All you need is Jesus

If Jesus tells you today, sell everything you have and give it to the poor? What would you keep? What would be difficult for you to sell? What would you miss within a week or two? Would you miss your clothes, your car, your stereo, your computer, your ipod? Or maybe you would miss your designer jeans? I imagine you already have an answer to these questions. Is what you are thinking about right now, more important than Jesus? Of course not! No way! There is nothing, nothing more important than Jesus.

Jesus is calling out to you today and saying, 'Don't make for yourself treasures on this earth where there are thieves, where there is evil; on the contrary, make treasures in heaven where everything will last forever and where there are no thieves.'

What is the most important thing for you today; Jesus or riches? If there is anything more important in your life right now besides Jesus, sell it together with everything else that is keeping you from fully serving him, and follow him. Jesus loves all the young people of this world.

Jesus opened his arms wide allowing his hands to be nailed to a cross so you might have salvation. He feels your pain, he understands your struggles, and most of all he desires nothing more than your happiness. Jesus loves jeans, no matter what kind, he loves young people, and he loves you.

The bible records how the young man turned his back on Jesus and walked away sad because he had many possessions. He chose his earthly things over Jesus. How will it be in your life? What will the story say about your experience? The decision is yours . . . choose Jesus.

THANK YOU JESUS FOR LETTING ME  
UNDERSTAND THERE IS NOTHING  
MORE IMPORTANT THAN MY SALVATION.

#### CHAPTER 5: A WHITE JEAN

After looking at so many styles of jeans could there be some that we are leaving out? No doubt, Jesus has come across more than a few in his efforts to reach young people with his love. Every day that goes by Jesus is found sewing, patching, and transforming the lives and jeans of young people everywhere. Life is such that we are always facing new challenges and trials, and with each challenge comes an opportunity for Jesus to reach us with his love. That's exactly what the bible means when it says:

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)



You need to know that these words are for you personally; in them you can hear the Jesus is telling you personally that he loves you!

As a matter of fact every young person who turns their life and jeans over to Jesus by reading this book will be another chapter to be added to this book. Share with your friends what Jesus is doing and has done in your life

Have you ever stopped to wonder how Jesus must've been in his youth? Maybe you can't even imagine that at one time Jesus was 12, 13, and 14 years old? Maybe you haven't realized that he was once young like us. He faced the same challenges, temptations and trials that you and I face today. Surely there was a time when he felt lonely and in need of friends. There also must have been times when he wished his workday would come to an end.

As you realize that Jesus was also a youth, you begin to realize that he can identify with you. Jesus feels a very special love for those that have had to go through what he went through

Try to imagine what Jesus' life must've been as a young man. Can you imagine what life must've been like for him? Can you try to imagine what some of his hopes, dreams, and aspirations were? One of my favorite books by Ellen G. White talks about the early life of Jesus; there in *The Desire of Ages* page 68, she speaks about how he grew up.

The childhood and youth of Jesus were spent in a little mountain village. There was no place on earth that would not have been honored by His presence. The palaces of kings would have been privileged in receiving Him as a guest. But He passed by the homes of wealth, the courts of royalty, and the renowned seats of learning, to make His home in obscure and despised Nazareth.

It's interesting to note that Jesus spent his youth in a place with a dubious reputation. We could even say Jesus grew up in the hood. Jesus probably grew up surrounded by theft, violence, and all sorts of crime. You can be sure that Jesus lived a life of difficulty and great risk. The enemy of souls was constantly on the look out to see how he could destroy him. Yet in spite of the odds being against he remained faithful and true to his heavenly father. He lived a perfect life so he could perfectly represent us as our savior.

The description Ellen White gives us about Jesus' upbringing and place of birth lets us know that his world wasn't much different from our world. In the middle of the ghetto Jesus was able to keep his jeans perfectly WHITE. His perfect life means that he never, not even once, dirtied his jeans.

The bible says he hung out with sinners eating with them often. Yet in spite of showing himself to be their friend he never participated in their sins. This is how he showed his love for them. Jesus remained an honest person even though he entered into the house of Zacchaeus, whom everyone knew to be a thief. Jesus honored his mom and dad out of

love for them and God. He walked a life of honor and victory. Even in his darkest hour as he endured the torture and abuse of those who would take his life, he never once treated anyone harshly. Jesus lived a perfect life. He received power from his father in heaven to live this wonderful life. Can you imagine spending a day with Jesus? Where would you go hang out? How would you talk to him? Would you take him to meet your friends? Why or why not? The truth is, sometimes we don't even manage to spend a whole day with him. Meanwhile Jesus longs to spend every single day with us from now till the end of the world.

Jesus cared more for you as his creation than for all of his possessions and heavenly riches. He gave up more than you and I will ever give up in order to give you eternal life. When the father asked Jesus to come and die for us he did it gladly. Do you think that Jesus' holy life keeps him from loving you? Nothing could be further from the truth. Do you feel you are too much of a sinner to come to Jesus? You are the reason he came to die! The pure life that Jesus lived doesn't make him love us less. The bible says his love for us increases as we come close to him.

The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving—kindness." (Jeremiah 31:3)

Around two thousand years ago, Jesus came into this world, and took on human form.

Jesus became like us, he came to this earth approximately two thousand years ago, and his love marked an impressive event in the course of this planet. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 the bible shows us how Jesus can give us a life of justice because he is true justice. We can find cleansing because Jesus is true purity. Jesus possesses all the attributes we need in order to be saved. The book Steps to Christ, chapter 6, talks about the glory of God, that can change anyone who wants a real lifestyle. Take some time to read this chapter as well as this incredible book.

Today, why don't you join in giving glory to God for the life of our Savior Jesus Christ and make a decision. Take a moment to pray to him now, tell him you need him, tell him how your life has no color or joy when he does not live in your heart and

**TODAY I WANT TO LIVE LIKE JESUS  
AND HAVE HIM AS MY REPRESENTATIVE.**

## **CHAPTER 6: AN ETERNAL JEAN**

Many times, when one buys an appliance or an electronic device, a lifetime guarantee is not only a good idea; it's essential. This assures you that if anything happens you will be able to replace it at no additional cost. This is incredibly valuable. Now, knowing how valuable this could be to customers, why is it that many other products don't offer similar guarantees for their products? Could it be that their products don't really have the quality

they claim? Now how would you like to have a lifetime guarantee for your jeans? I've never heard about that before. Have you? Wouldn't it be great though? If you think it is, then you have to ask, 'why hasn't anyone come out with that guarantee?'

Now, can you imagine an eternal jean? When I talk about this jean style, I am talking about those who are still enjoying their youth, those who have accepted Jesus on this earth, and will enjoy the eternity that has been prepared for all youth in Heaven.

In the Scriptures we find many who are worried about finding eternal life. Let's name a few: Nicodemus, the rich young ruler, the Philippian jailer, and many others. These and many others the Bible doesn't mention had one thing in common—they went to Jesus looking for eternity.

There is one individual who is worthy of mention as well. The Bible refers to him as an 'expert in the law.' Luke records the episode like this:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' " (Luke 10:25).

This story began with the question: What must I do to inherit eternal life? But this man, a spiritual leader of the time, was surprised by Jesus who instead asked him a question:

"What is written in the law? How do you read it?" It was then that the man answered:

He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " (Luke 10:27).

Jesus congratulated the man for his reply and told him that if he did all these things he would live. But the ‘expert’ wanted an answer and when he realized he had made a mistake, he looked to justify himself and then asked Jesus: “who is my neighbor?” In the book Christ’s Object Lessons, chapter 27 page 376, it says:

Among the Jews the question, “Who is my neighbor?” caused endless dispute. . . . This question Christ answered in the parable of the good Samaritan. He showed that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is every one who is the property of God.

The parable of the Good Samaritan was given because an ‘expert in the law’ wanted to live forever.

As you read on consider the question How can youth live forever? This parable shows us the truth about Jesus’ dream for each one of us! Jesus wants all of us to live eternally! Notice what the Bible says:

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side” (vs. 30-32).

A long time ago the worst thief of all time took us, assaulted and wounded us and left us without hope. The greatest enemy ever faced, came upon two ‘newlyweds’ and hit them with the hammer of sin as they lived harmoniously in the city of peace. They lost their lives in one afternoon! Adam and Eve suffered the evil touch of Satan himself and from that moment on our first parents and all humanity together with them have followed a path of sin, death and destruction.

The Bible tells us about a Priest and a Levite who saw the terrible condition of this poor soul and kept on walking. They probably had their reasons. Maybe neither knew first aid. Maybe they just didn’t feel like it. Whatever the reason, the end result was that this guy remained on the ground, in a pool of blood, bleeding to death.

All of a sudden, a Samaritan comes upon the scene. As he is on the road to Jerusalem (literally traveling the opposite way the Priest and the Levite were traveling) to sell ‘first aid’ supplies; wine and oil. The word says he was moved to compassion and had pity on this guy. Jesus also was moved to compassion and had pity on us, he got up from his throne and left his heavenly kingdom to come to our rescue. He left his kingly crown and exchanged it for a crown of thorns. He exchanged his heavenly choir, for the noise and bedlam of a smelly stable. He left his royal and perfect throne and exchanged it for an

animal feeding trough. He did this because he had pity on you and wanted to save you and give you an Eternal Jean.

The Samaritan cleaned each wound by pouring wine on them, he poured oil on them so the wounds would heal in time. Once he stopped the bleeding and stabilized his patient, he put him on his donkey and took him to the inn and he himself took care of him. Jesus did the same with you and me. He came along the roadside of our life and took charge of the situation. As we lay dying in the pool of blood of sin, he died on the cross to provide an eternal blood transfusion, which would give us life eternal. He cleaned all our wounds. He took personal care of us and when he left this earth, he sent the Holy Spirit (the oil), to heal the wounds so that you would not suffer the pain of sin. Jesus cleansed you from your sins at the cross of Calvary and declared you clean by the power of his blood.

Once he had given the man first aid, he took him to a safe place and personally cared for him, but the time came when he had to leave. The Samaritan left two silver coins, enough to cover any need this man might have. Those two silver coins are the Bible, the only book that gives testimony of the one who saved you, read it, study it, and you will see the great blessings you will find for your life.

That Samaritan is Jesus, he promised to come back for the wounded man. The Desire of Ages, page 503 reads:

In the story of the good Samaritan, Jesus gave a picture of Himself and His mission. Man had been deceived, bruised, robbed, and ruined by Satan, and left to perish; but the Savior had compassion on our helpless condition. He left His glory, to come to our rescue. He found us ready to die, and He undertook our case. He healed our wounds. He covered us with His robe of righteousness. He opened to us a refuge of safety, and made complete provision for us at His own charges. He died to redeem us.

When Christ ascended to heaven he sent angels to comfort eleven young men who were looking up in anguish as he departed. On that occasion he promised he would return. Today we are still awaiting the return of Christ to this earth, and once he comes, every young person who has given their life to him will have an Eternal Jean.

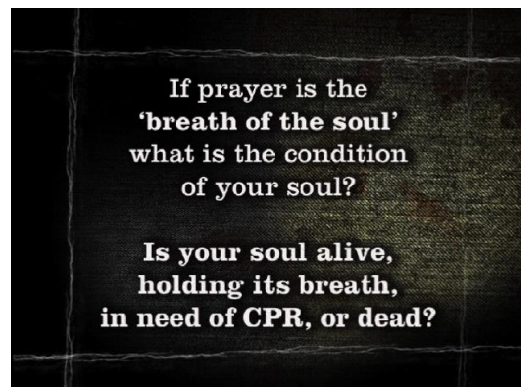
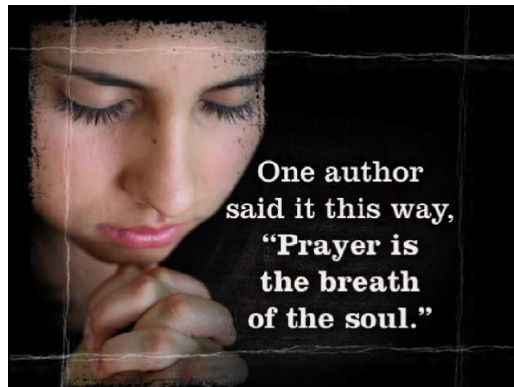
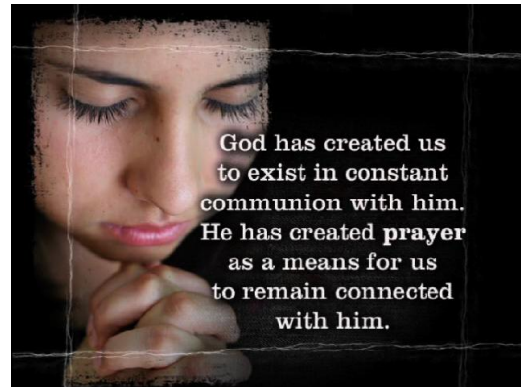
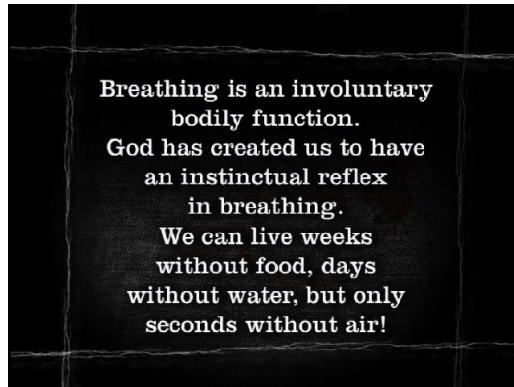
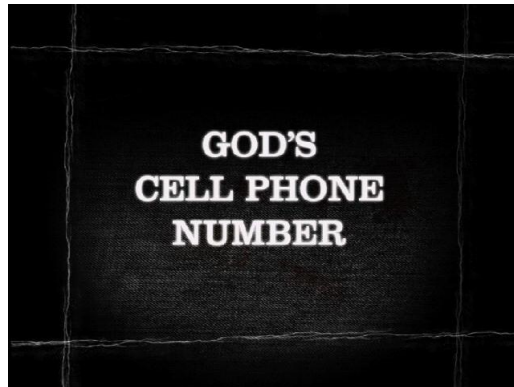
I want to share that great moment with you and it is my greatest desire that you share what you've learned in this book with others, so they too will read this powerful message and enjoy the love that God has for those of us who wear jeans.

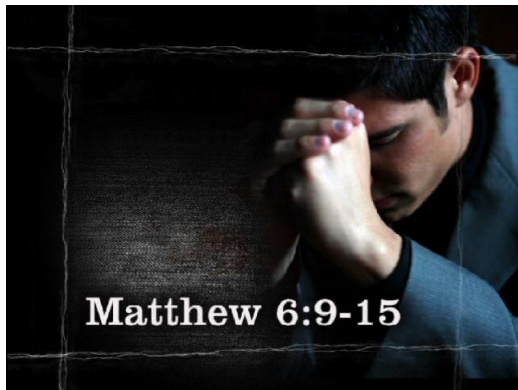
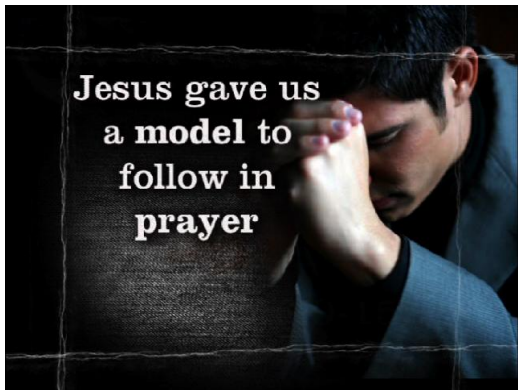
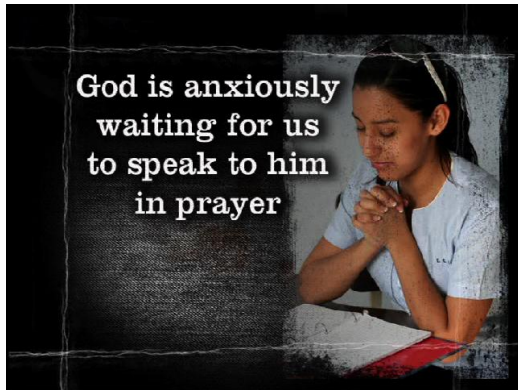
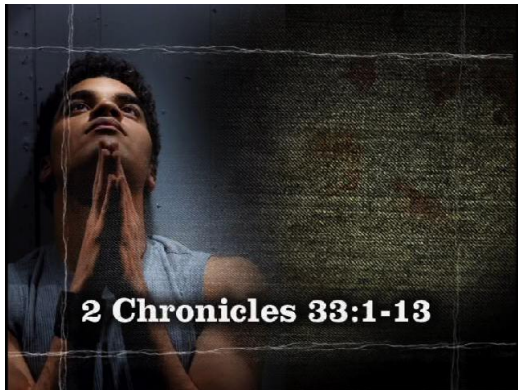
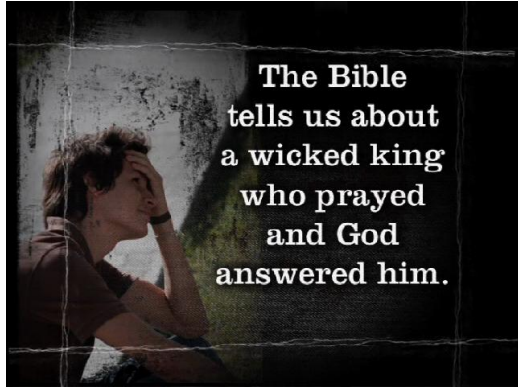
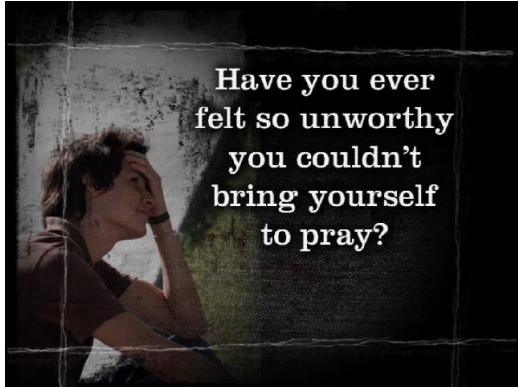
If you are wondering, how you too can live forever, find the answer in God's word. Accept Jesus into your life and let him take charge of your life, he'll know what to do because he loves you. Always remember that JESUS LOVES JEANS!

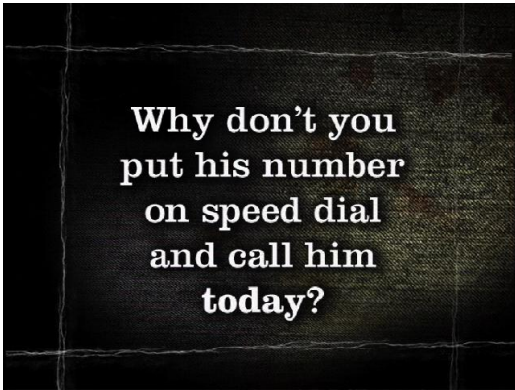
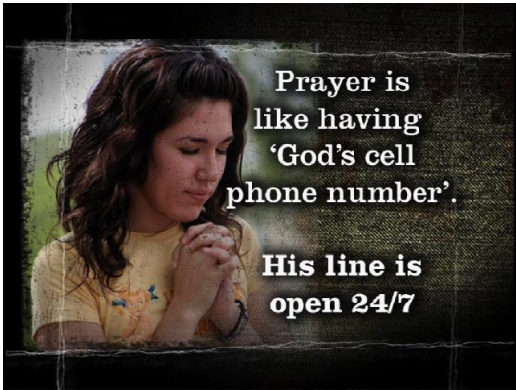
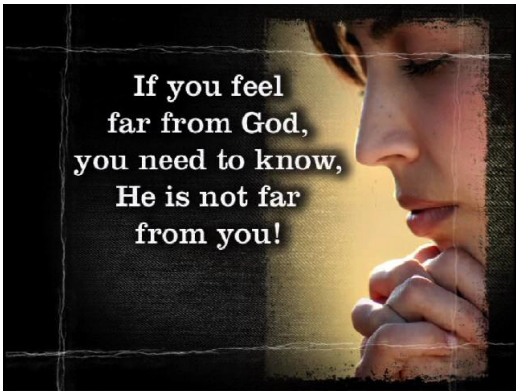
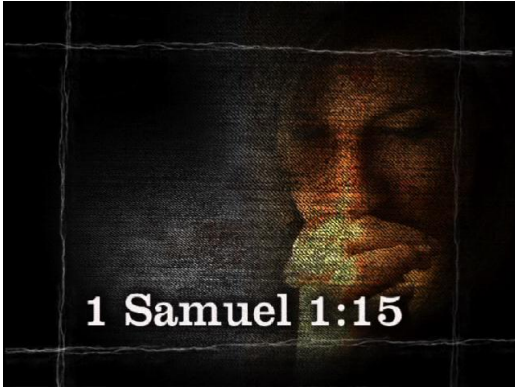
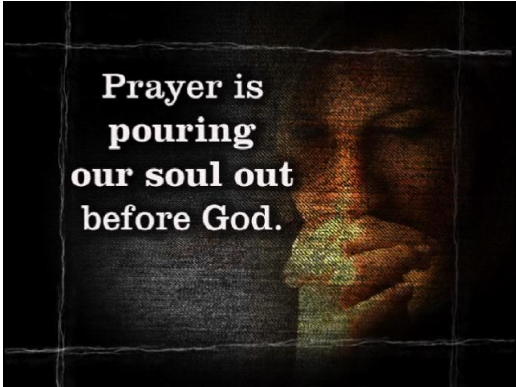
**Jesus Loves Jeans DVD—Lessons 1-15.**

DVD images should be read left to right.

**DVD LESSON 1—GOD’S CELL PHONE NUMBER (Prayer).**



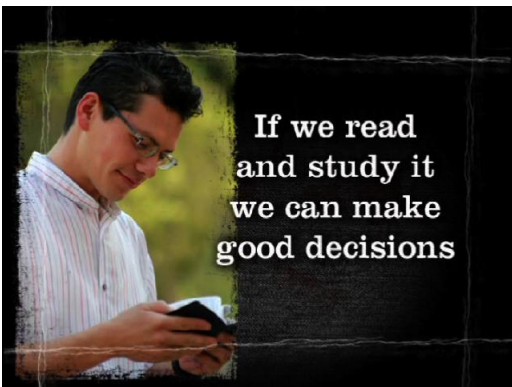
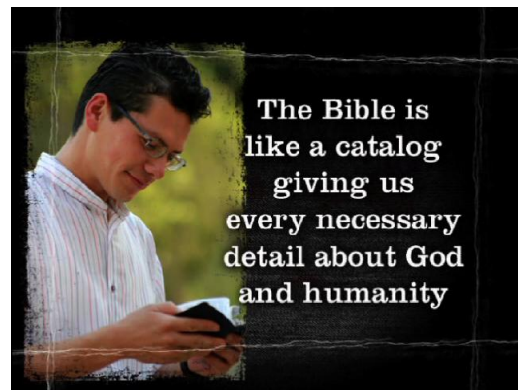
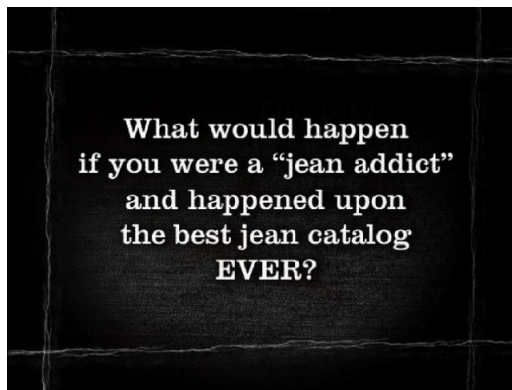
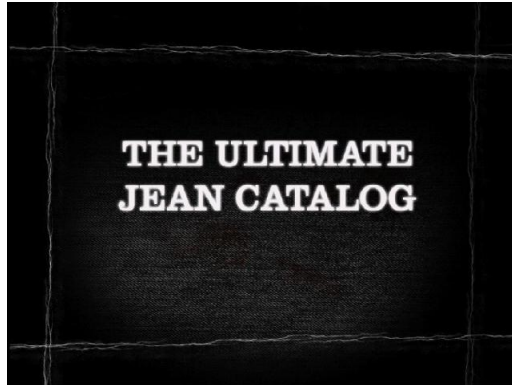








DVD LESSON 2—THE COMPLETE JEAN CATALOG (The Bible).



**2 Timothy 3:14-16**

**What else testifies about God?  
Psalms 19:1-3**

**Who were  
the authors  
of the Bible?**

**Ezekiel 2:2  
2 Peter 1:21**

**Can we  
really believe  
the things  
this catalog  
offers?**

**1 Corinthians 1:18  
Isaiah 8:20**

**The Bible gives us  
internal and external  
evidence of its  
divine origin**

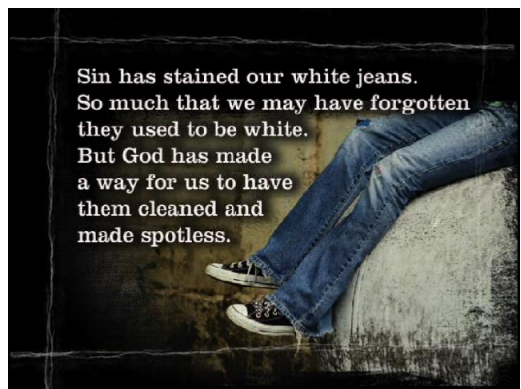
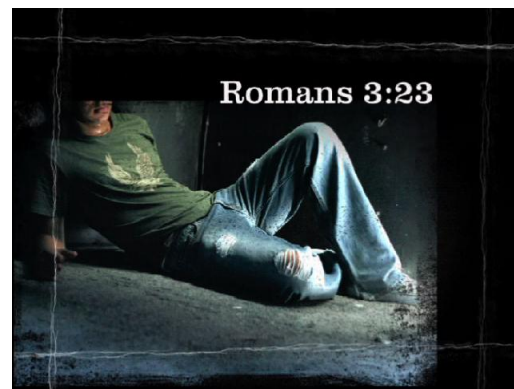
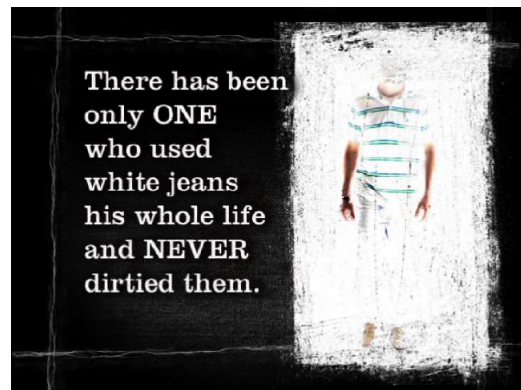
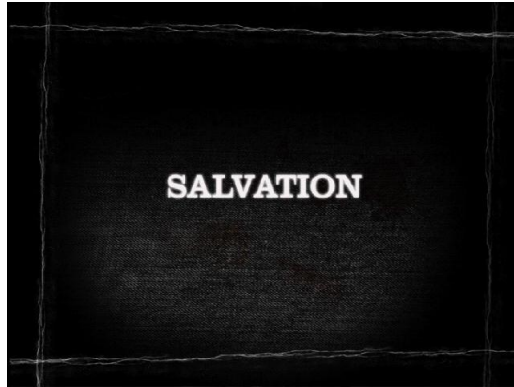
**1 Corinthians 2:12**

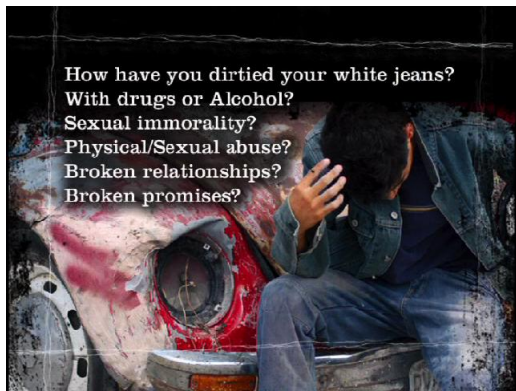
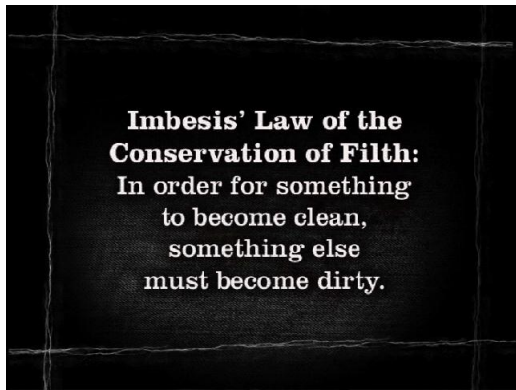
The Bible must be read in faith  
and with the help of the  
Spirit of God!

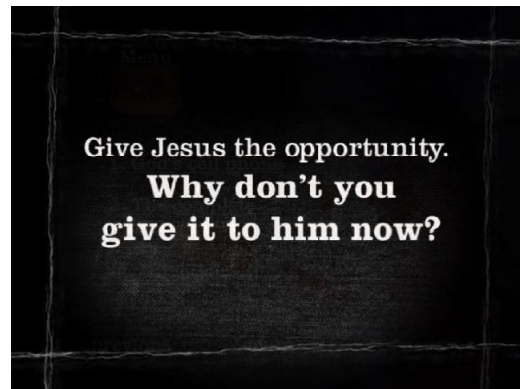
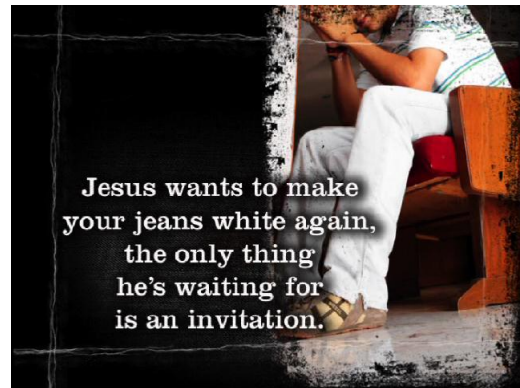
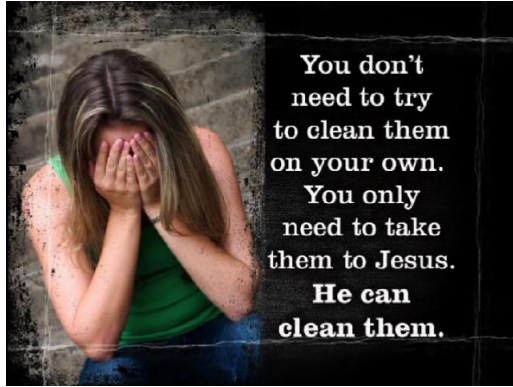
**1 Corinthians 2:14**

Would you  
like to place  
your faith in God  
and in His Word?

DVD LESSON 3—SALVATION (The Plan of Redemption).








DVD LESSON 4—TAKE A LOOK IN THE MIRROR (Sin).

**TAKE A LOOK  
IN THE MIRROR!**

Why do you think  
it's so hard to live  
a holy life?


Do you find it  
easier to live  
a sinful life?



A young girl  
asking these  
same questions  
put it this way,  
“Why can't I  
stop sinning?”

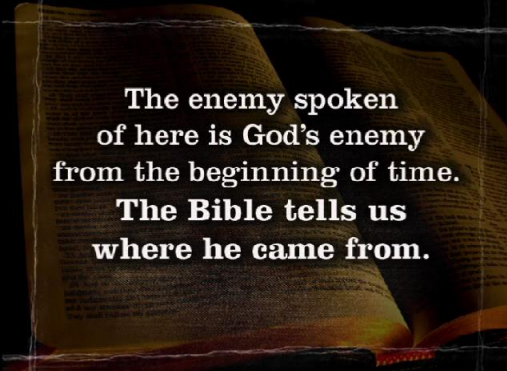


Is there a cure for sin? If you  
look in the mirror closely  
you realize who  
you really are:  
A human being  
dominated  
by sin.



**Matthew 13:24-28**

The enemy spoken  
of here is God's enemy  
from the beginning of time.  
**The Bible tells us  
where he came from.**





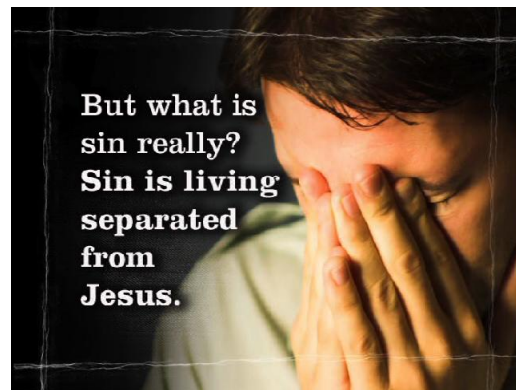


**Ezekiel 28:14-17**  
**Isaiah 14:13-14**



Sin originated in heaven  
and spilled over  
onto planet earth

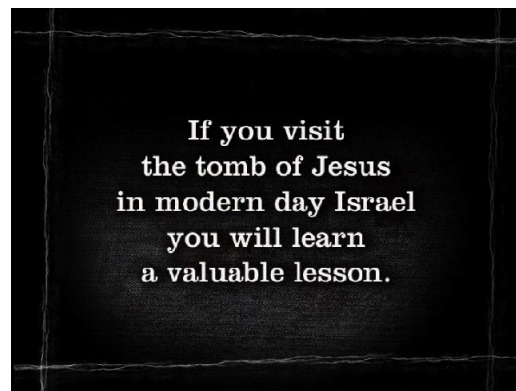
**Revelation 12:7-9**



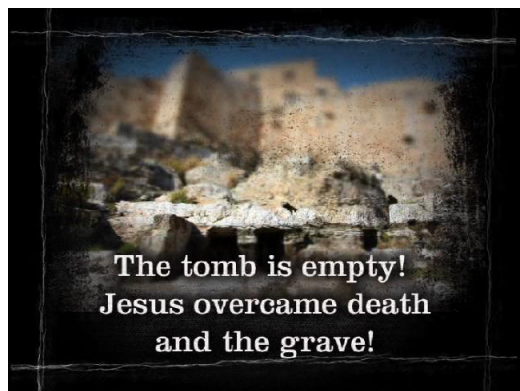
But what is  
sin really?  
**Sin is living  
separated  
from  
Jesus.**



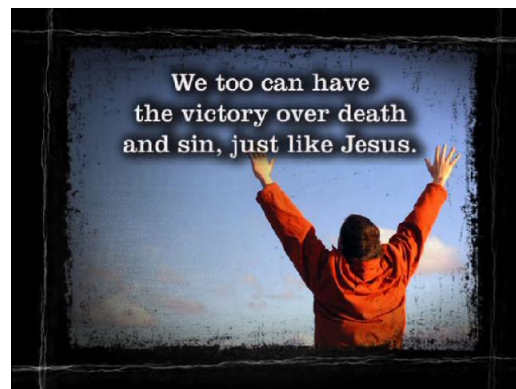
**John 3:16-17**



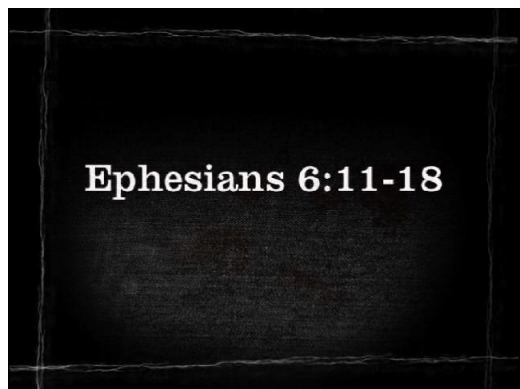
If you visit  
the tomb of Jesus  
in modern day Israel  
you will learn  
a valuable lesson.



The tomb is empty!  
Jesus overcame death  
and the grave!



We too can have  
the victory over death  
and sin, just like Jesus.



**Ephesians 6:11-18**

**The 3 most  
powerful secrets  
to overcoming sin:**

**#1- Pray without ceasing.  
Not just daily, cultivate  
an attitude of prayer.**



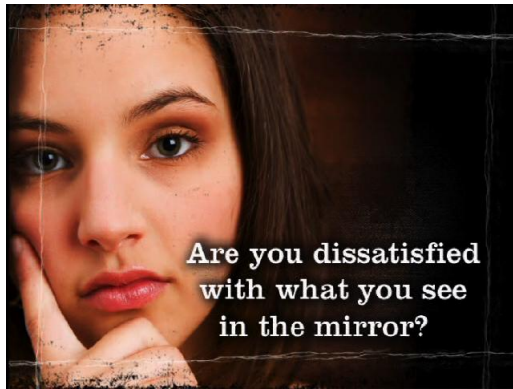
**#2 Study the Bible.**



**#3 Tell someone  
about Jesus.**

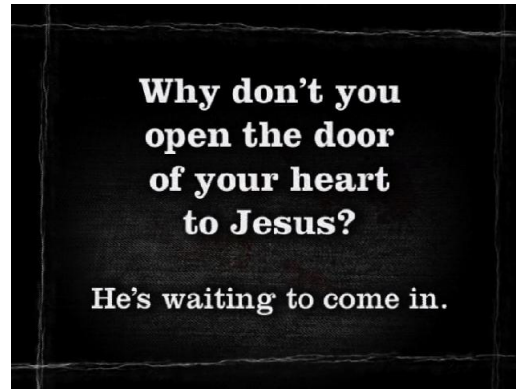


**Are you dissatisfied  
with what you see  
in the mirror?**



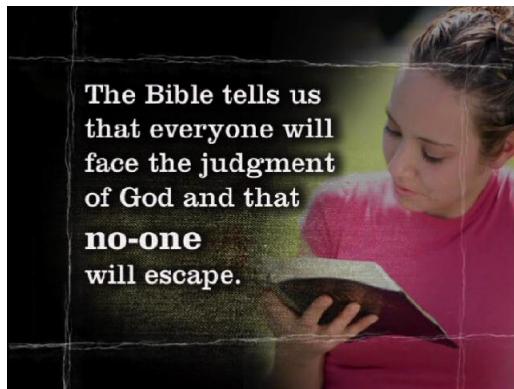
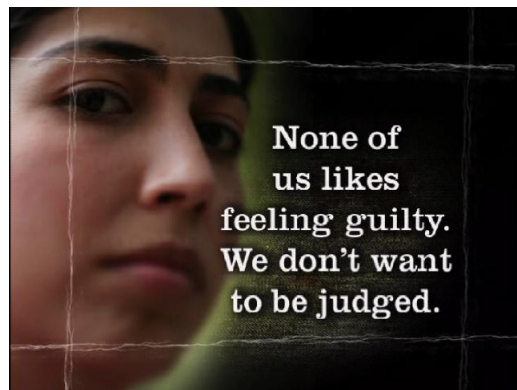
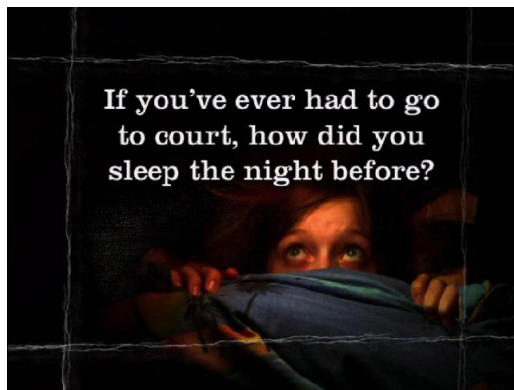
**Why don't you  
open the door  
of your heart  
to Jesus?**


**He's waiting to come in.**



DVD LESSON 5—HOW TO SLEEP LIKE A BABY (The Judgment).

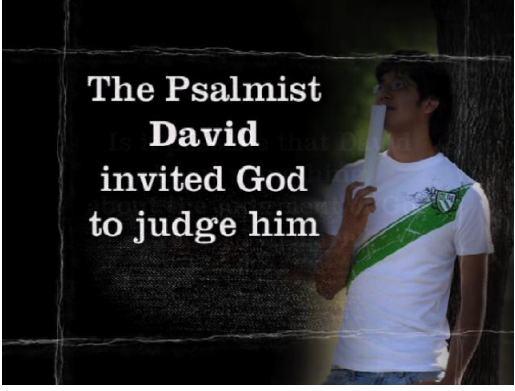
**HOW TO  
SLEEP LIKE  
A BABY**






There is someone in the Bible  
who instead of fleeing  
from God's judgment  
begged for it!

**Psalm 26:1**



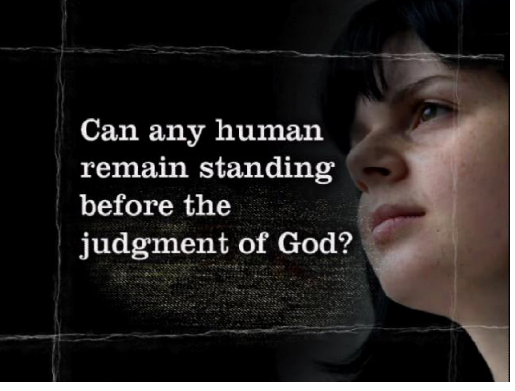
The Psalmist  
**David**  
invited God  
to judge him

Is it possible that David  
knew something  
about the judgment of God  
we need to learn?



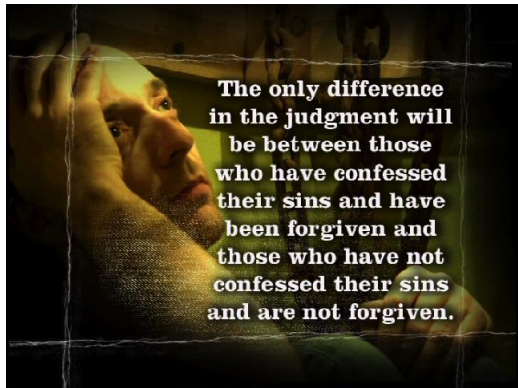
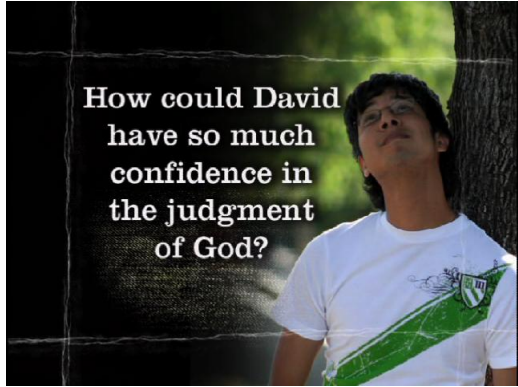
The Bible says  
that we **ALL**  
will have to  
stand before  
God in the  
judgment.

**Hebrews 9:27**  
**Romans 14:11**



Can any human  
remain standing  
before the  
judgment of God?

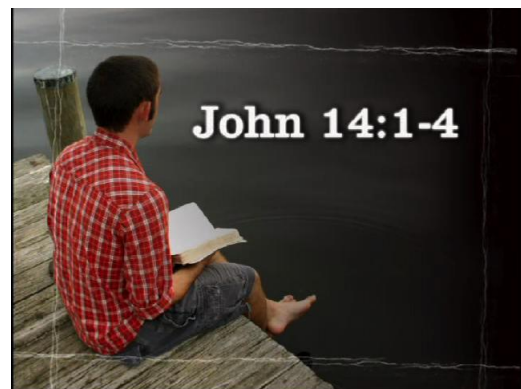
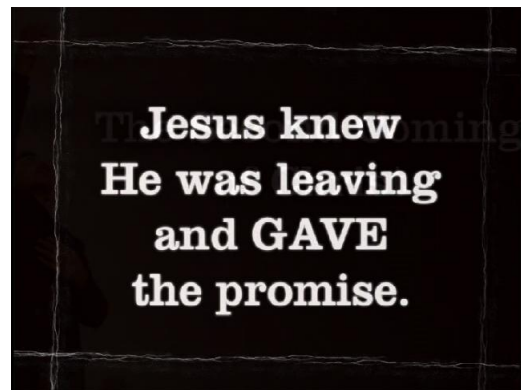
**Revelation 6:17**

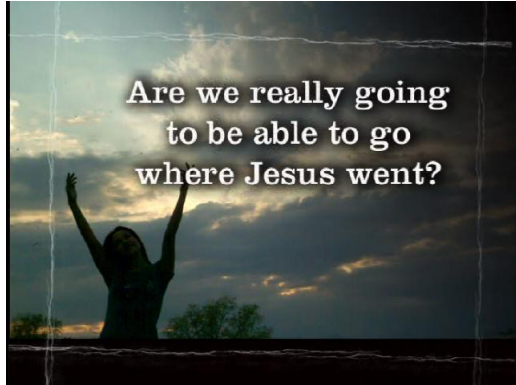


**Ask Jesus today  
to cover your life  
with his blood.**

**If you do,  
you'll always  
sleep like a baby.**

DVD LESSON 6—THE PROMISED JEAN (The Second Coming).





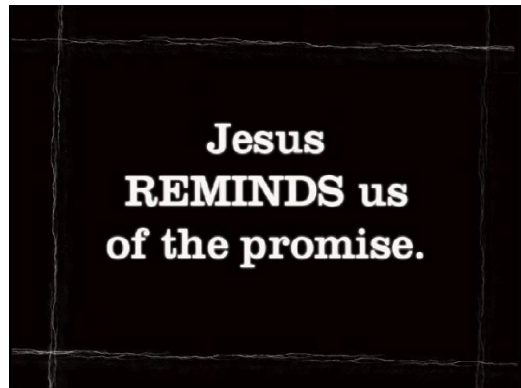
Are we really going  
to be able to go  
where Jesus went?



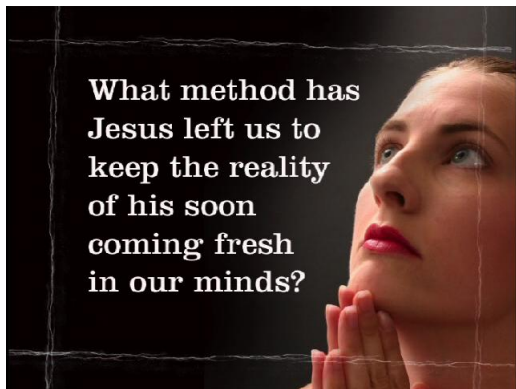
Jesus  
**CONFIRMS**  
the promise.



Acts 1:1-3



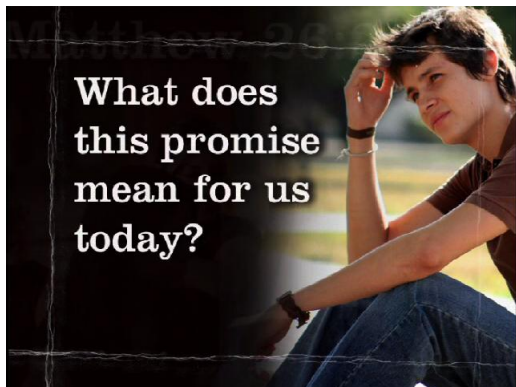
Jesus  
**REMINDS** us  
of the promise.



What method has  
Jesus left us to  
keep the reality  
of his soon  
coming fresh  
in our minds?



Matthew 26:26-29

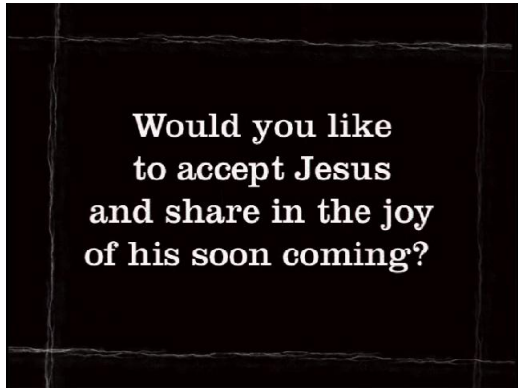
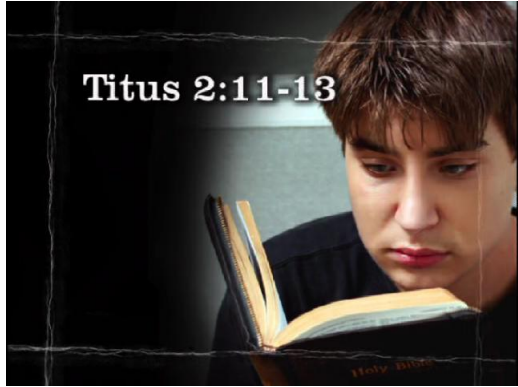


What does  
this promise  
mean for us  
today?



Jesus helps us  
**CHERISH**  
the promise.





DVD LESSON 7—INCREASING YOUR JEANS LIFESPAN (The Sabbath).

**HOW TO  
INCREASE  
YOUR JEANS'  
LIFESPAN**

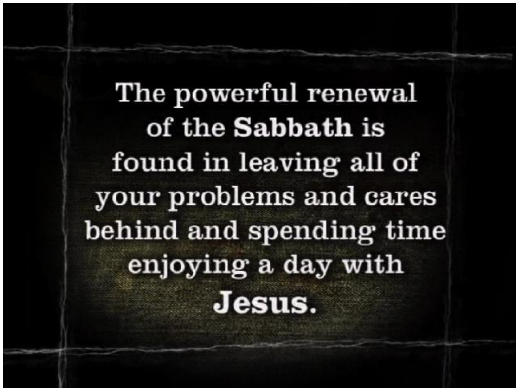
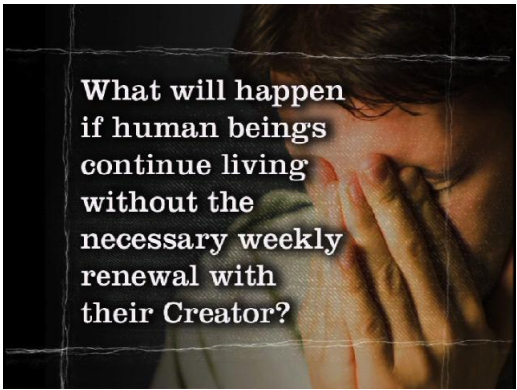
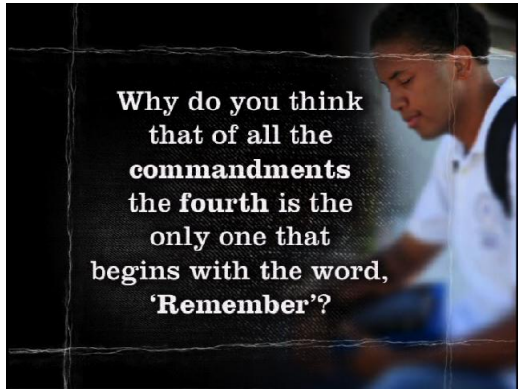
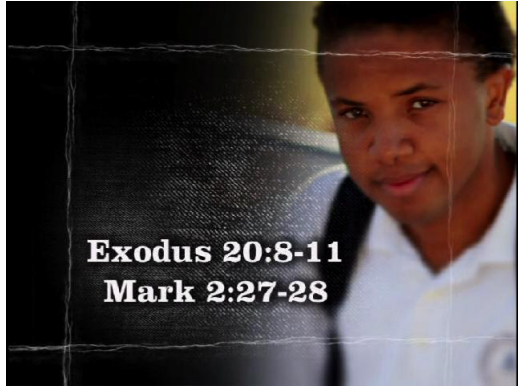
**Every pair of jeans  
has a care tag.**  
It tells you what  
you should and  
shouldn't do to your  
brand new jeans.

If you faithfully  
follow these  
instructions you  
will increase  
your jeans lifespan  
and be able to  
enjoy them longer.

**The Bible talks  
about humanity's  
care tag**

**Genesis 2:1-3**

**God created  
human beings  
for abundant living.  
He also designed  
for them a time  
of renewal.**



**Jesus rested  
on the  
Sabbath.**



**The Sabbath  
is so holy that  
even in death  
Jesus rested  
on it.**



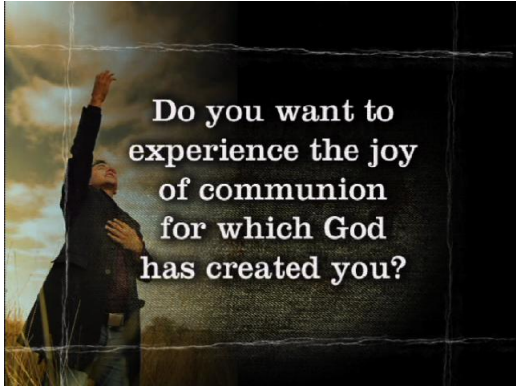
**After Jesus observed  
the fourth commandment,  
He rose again on the  
first day of  
the week – Sunday.**



**Jesus is our  
perfect example  
and as his disciples  
He invites us to live  
as He lived.**



Are you interested  
in lengthening  
your own life?



Do you want to  
experience the joy  
of communion  
for which God  
has created you?

Why don't you  
decide **today**  
to keep  
**God's Sabbath?**



Menu

- [7. How to increase your jeans' lifespan](#)
- [8. You are not alone](#)
- [9. Here today, gone tomorrow](#)


[previous](#)      [main](#)      [next](#)

DVD LESSON 8—YOU ARE NOT ALONE (The Church).

**YOU ARE  
NOT ALONE**

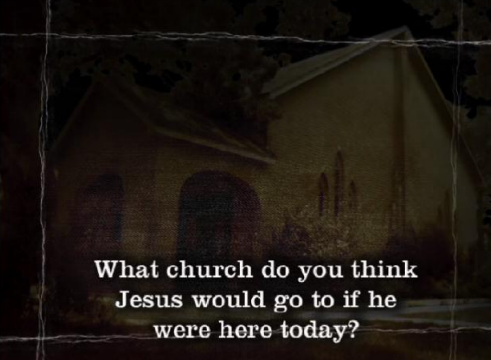


How many  
stores can  
you name  
that sell  
jeans?



There has to be  
at least one on every corner.  
All these stores offer  
something different  
yet the same.

What about churches?  
Don't they also offer  
the same thing?  
Or could there be a church  
that is God's true church?

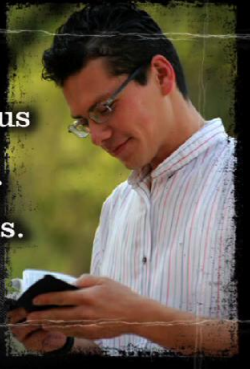


What church do you think  
Jesus would go to if he  
were here today?



God's true Church is where  
His young people gather  
to declare that He is  
their Lord and Savior.

The Bible clearly tells us what the purpose of the church is.



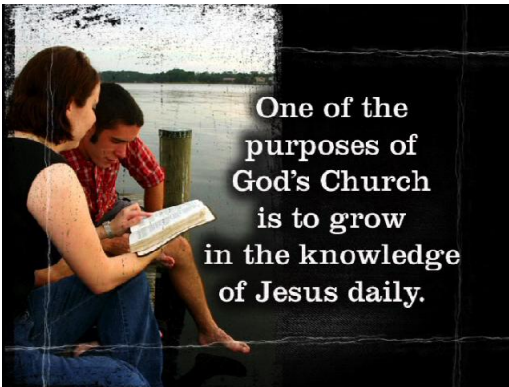
Genesis 12:3

The Church of God exists for young people who believe in God to receive His blessings and likewise share His blessings



Ephesians 4:11-15

One of the purposes of God's Church is to grow in the knowledge of Jesus daily.



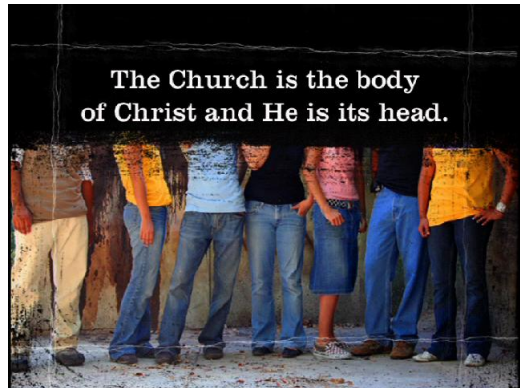
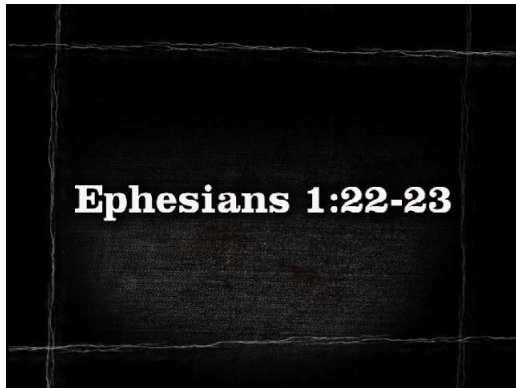
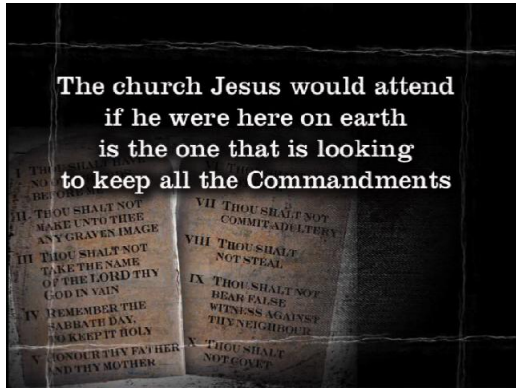
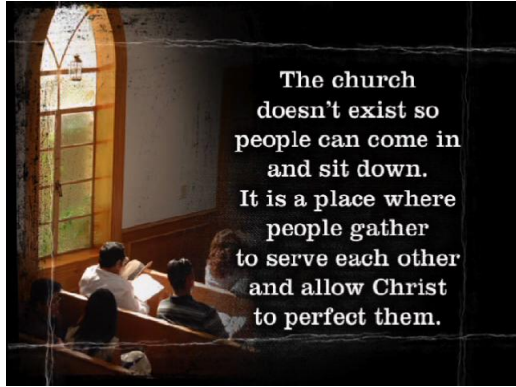
Have you ever met someone who told you, "I believe in God but I don't see why I have to attend a church?"

1 Corinthians 12:12-20



The church is the Body of Christ, and every young person plays an important role. How long would your hand last if you separated it from the rest of your body?







Would you like  
to be a part of the  
body of Christ?

Menu



[7. How to increase your jeans' lifespan](#)

[8. You are not alone](#)

[9. Here today, gone tomorrow](#)


[previous](#)      [main](#)      [next](#)




DVD LESSON 9—HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW (Death).

**HERE TODAY...  
GONE  
TOMORROW!**

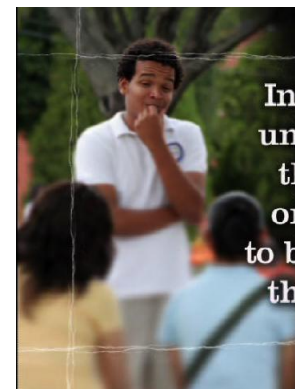
What do  
you think  
happens  
when you  
die?



Is it possible  
to understand  
the living  
by seeking  
the dead?



In order to  
understand  
the dead,  
one needs  
to begin with  
the living!

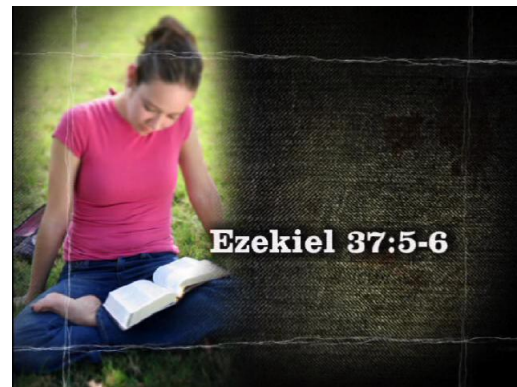
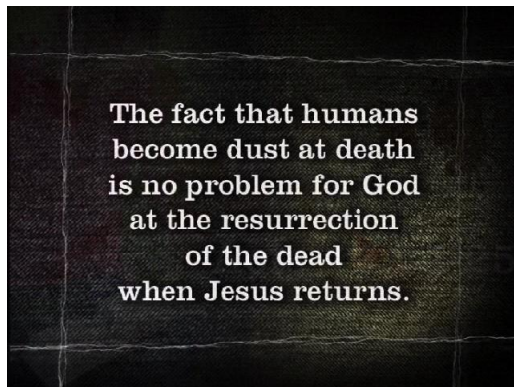
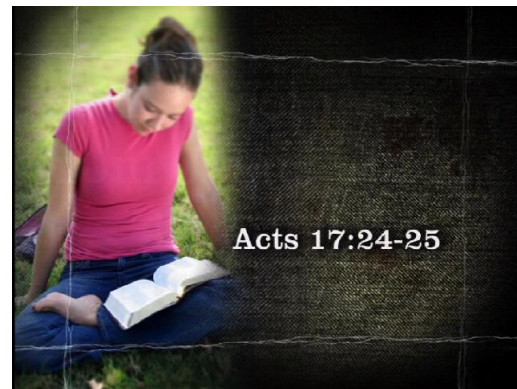
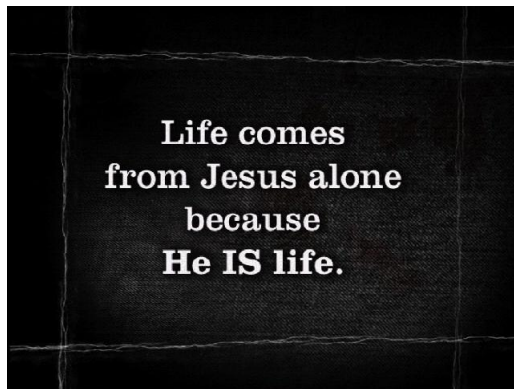
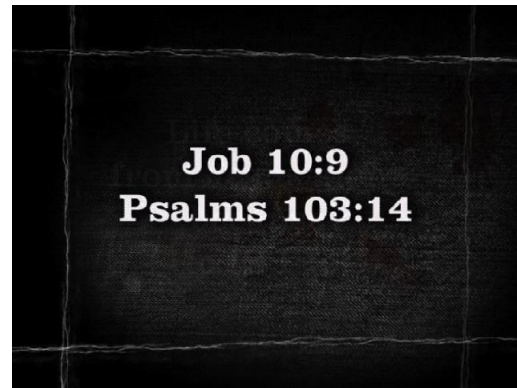
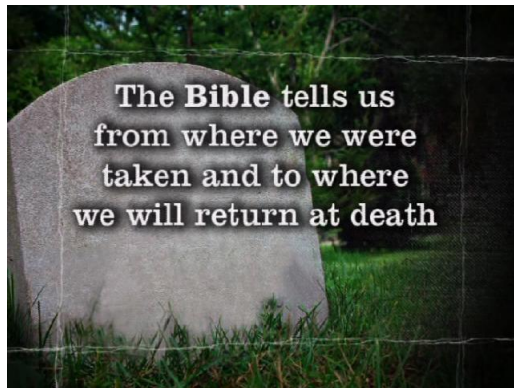
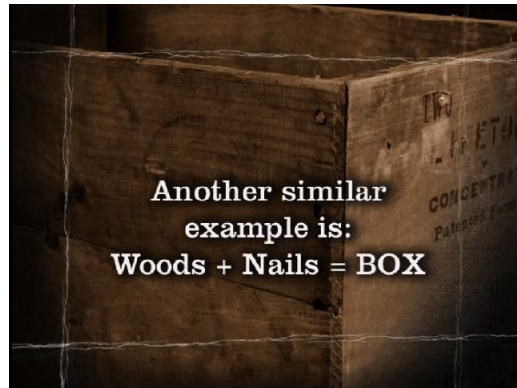
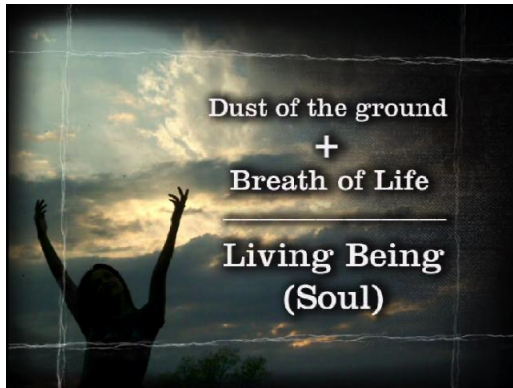


**Genesis 2:7**

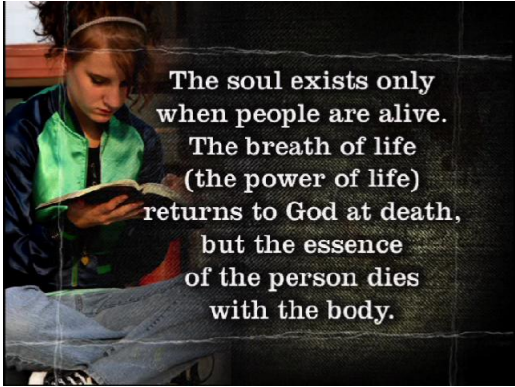


God took  
the same dirt  
kids like  
to play with,  
but he used it  
to create life.

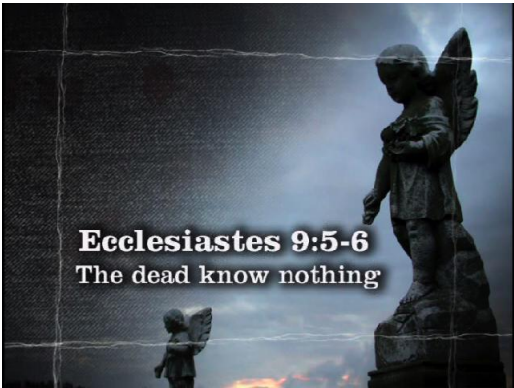




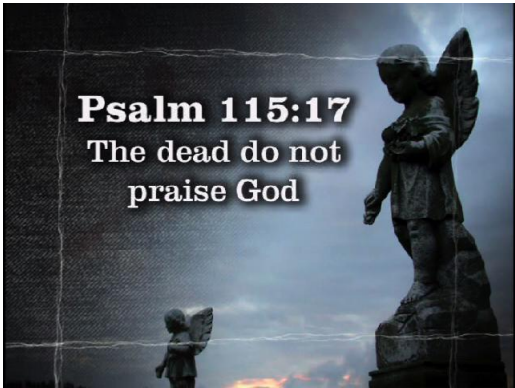
The Bible talks extensively about **Living Souls** but never about **Dead Souls**

A young girl with brown hair, wearing a blue and green jacket, is sitting and reading a book. The background is dark and textured.

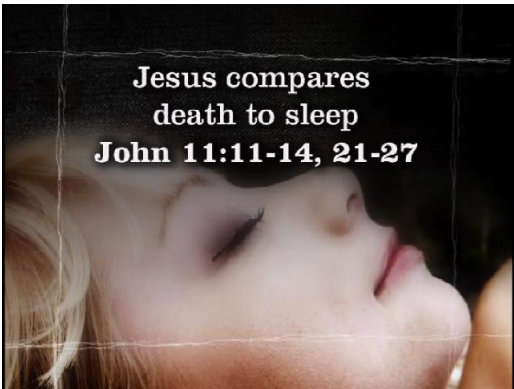
The soul exists only when people are alive. The breath of life (the power of life) returns to God at death, but the essence of the person dies with the body.

A large, dark statue of an angel with wings, standing on a pedestal. The background is a dark, cloudy sky with a small, glowing light source.

**Ecclesiastes 9:5-6**  
The dead know nothing

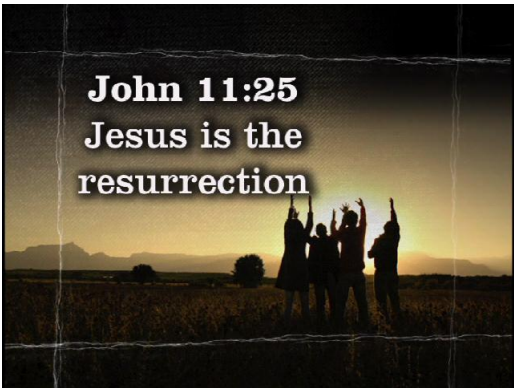
A large, dark statue of an angel with wings, standing on a pedestal. The background is a dark, cloudy sky with a small, glowing light source.

**Psalm 115:17**  
The dead do not praise God

A close-up of a young child's face, sleeping peacefully with eyes closed. The background is dark and textured.

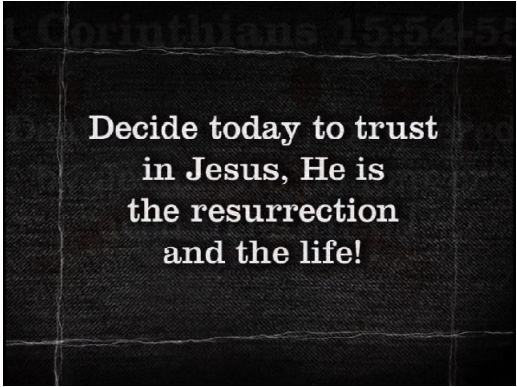
Jesus compares death to sleep  
**John 11:11-14, 21-27**

Lazarus was not in hell, purgatory or heaven when Jesus resurrected him. The dead are in an 'unconscious-like' state waiting for the Second Coming.

Silhouettes of several people standing in a field, raising their hands in praise or prayer. The background is a bright sunset or sunrise over a landscape.

**John 11:25**  
Jesus is the resurrection


Don't be deceived by those who claim to talk to the dead. Decide to follow Jesus today and rest in the peace of God's truth regarding death.



DVD LESSON 10—WITNESSING IS CONTAGIOUS (Evangelism).

**WITNESSING:  
IT'S CONTAGIOUS**


When you  
fall in love  
the feeling  
is truly  
**in**describable.



It doesn't matter  
who you talk to,  
your significant  
other ends  
up in the  
conversation.



**Being in love  
is AWESOME!**

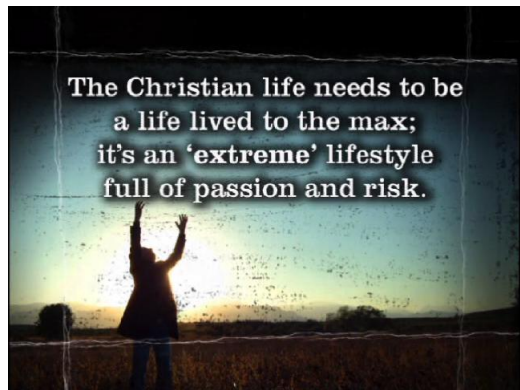
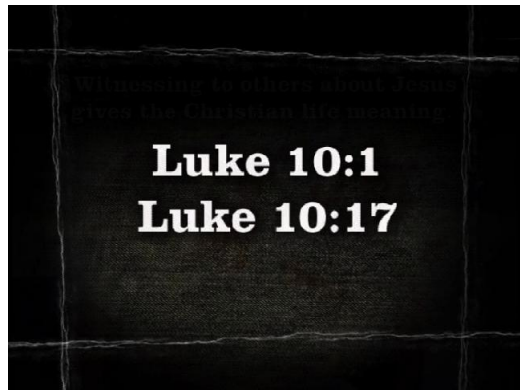
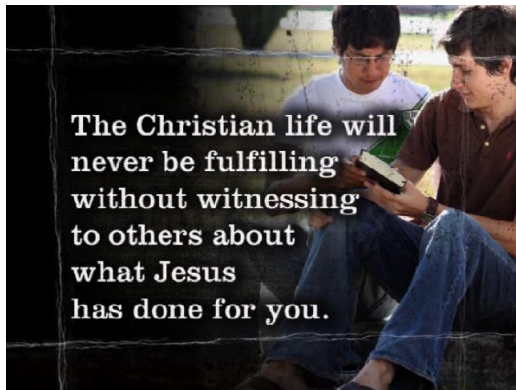
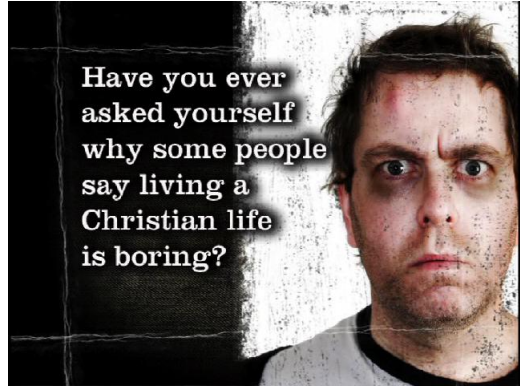


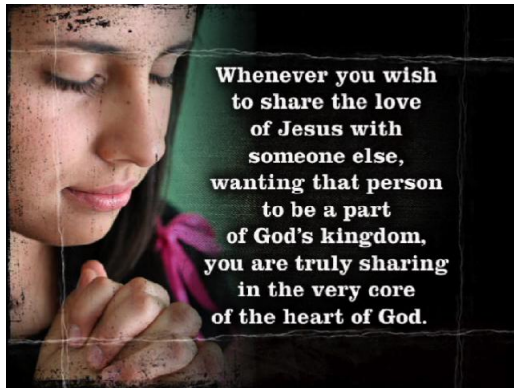
When you're  
**in love**  
you're proud  
to introduce  
your loved one  
to **everybody.**



The same thing  
happens when  
**Jesus** comes  
into your life.  
He makes you  
feel like no-one  
has ever made  
you feel before.







Whenever you wish to share the love of Jesus with someone else, wanting that person to be a part of God's kingdom, you are truly sharing in the very core of the heart of God.

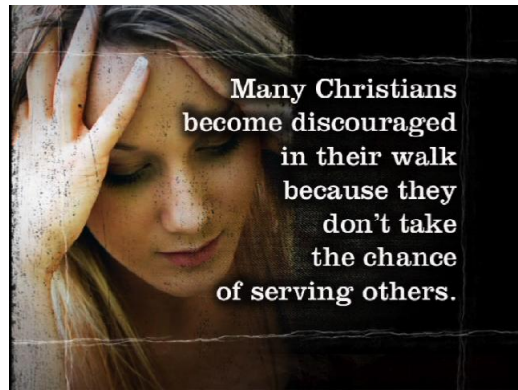


God promises the Holy Spirit to those who are faithful in sharing his love. Remember you are not alone!

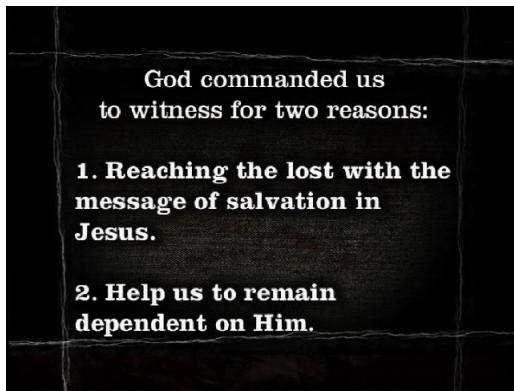
**Matthew 28:20**



When you risk sharing Jesus with others you are also considering their needs.



Many Christians become discouraged in their walk because they don't take the chance of serving others.

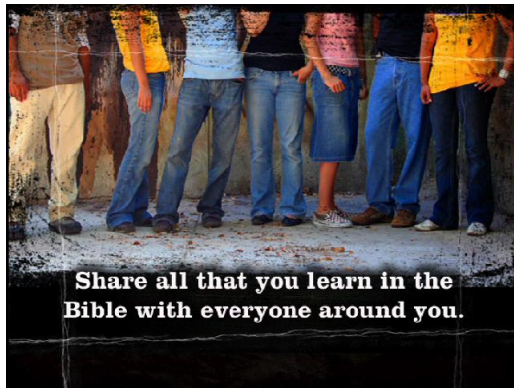


God commanded us to witness for two reasons:

1. Reaching the lost with the message of salvation in Jesus.
2. Help us to remain dependent on Him.



True disciples of Jesus put their love into action.



Share all that you learn in the Bible with everyone around you.



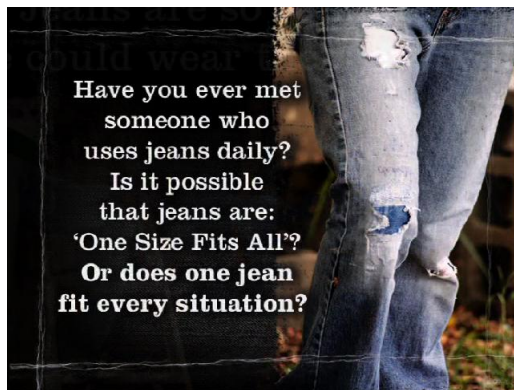
**Acts 22:15**



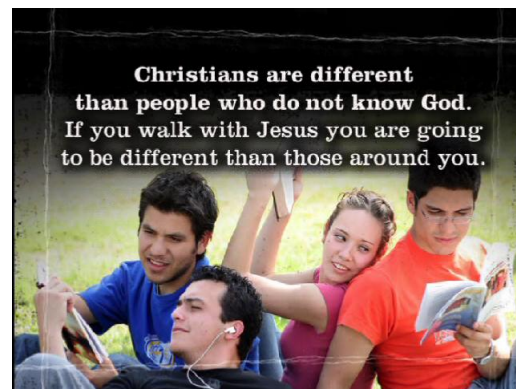
**I invite you to share  
from today on what you've  
learned of Jesus in  
His Word and what  
He's doing in your life.**

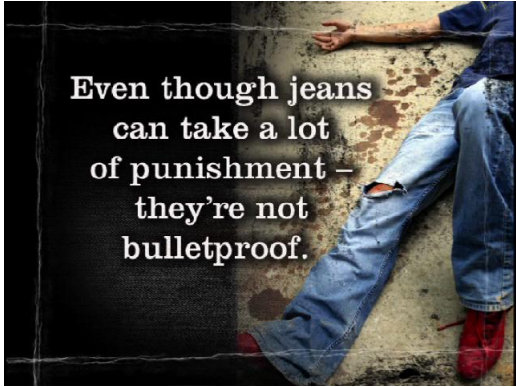
DVD LESSON 11—NOT 'ONE SIZE FITS ALL' (Christian Norms).

**JEANS ARE NOT:  
'ONE SIZE  
FITS ALL!'**



The truth is we do have  
other clothing options.  
With this in mind, let's look at  
some counsel's for living  
the Bible provides.



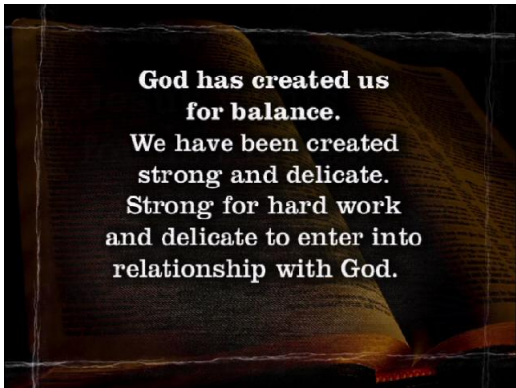


Some people fall  
into the trap of imbalance.  
They either walk in  
'lasciviousness' (la-sí-vius-ness)  
doing what they want  
and claiming it's OK,  
or living in bondage  
to empty traditions.  
**Every extreme is harmful.**

**Galatians 5:13**

The young people  
described here  
thought because  
Jesus had provided  
their salvation they  
were free of personal  
responsibility and could  
now do what they pleased.


**Galatians 5:4**



**Be active.**  
Proverbs 6:6-11



**Get plenty of sunlight.**  
It has been proven to heal and strengthen our bodies



**Drink plenty of water.**



**Be temperate (balanced), live free from drugs, alcohol, and stimulants.**



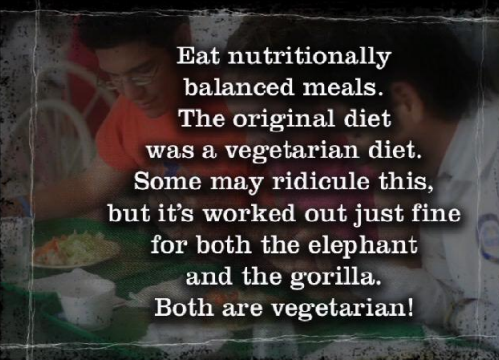
**Rest**  
Mark 6:31



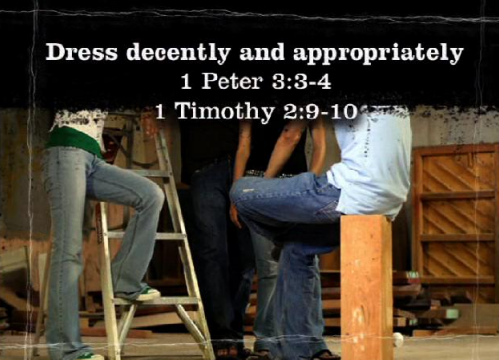
**Only spend time watching positive things**  
Philippians 4:8

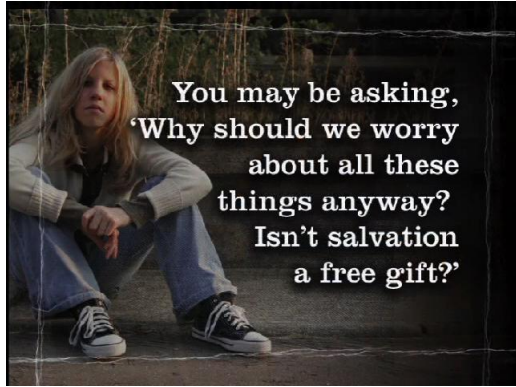


**Eat nutritionally balanced meals.**  
The original diet was a vegetarian diet. Some may ridicule this, but it's worked out just fine for both the elephant and the gorilla. Both are vegetarian!



**Dress decently and appropriately**  
1 Peter 3:3-4  
1 Timothy 2:9-10





The most compelling reason  
for living a life according  
to the norms of the Bible  
is out of love for Jesus.  
He’s got the roadmap  
for success, and that’s why  
he asks us to walk  
in his path.  
**Philippians 2:5-11**

**Take Jesus up  
on his offer  
to live a holy life!  
Do it today!**

Menu



[10. Witnessing is contagious](#)

[11. Jeans are not  
‘one size fits all’](#)

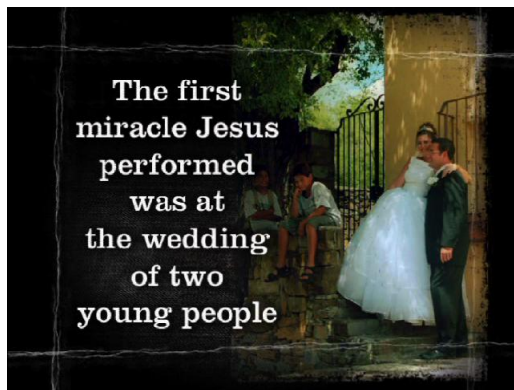
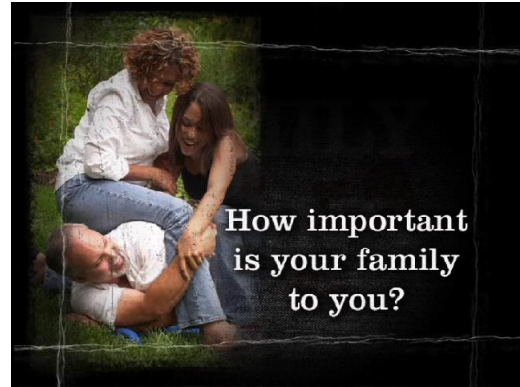
[12. Family Jeans](#)



[previous](#)   [main](#)   [next](#)

DVD LESSON 12—FAMILY JEANS (The Christian Home).

**FAMILY  
JEANS**



Family is  
so important to God  
that it was the first  
institution he blessed.

**Genesis 2:21-24**

Your spiritual  
experience at church  
needs to be felt  
in your family as well.

7 steps  
to experience  
the miracle  
working power of  
God in your family:

1. Invite Jesus  
to come  
into your  
family



**Psalms 127:1**

2. When you  
face family  
problems...  
cry out  
to Jesus!



3. Obey what  
God  
commands  
you in his  
Word.

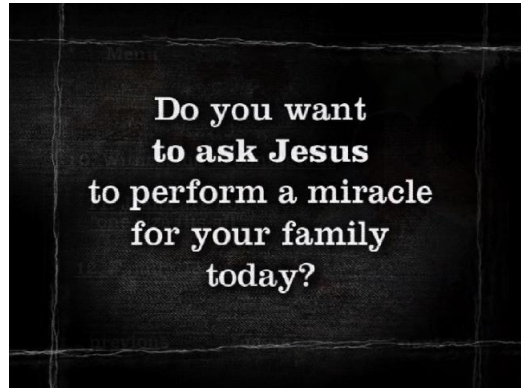
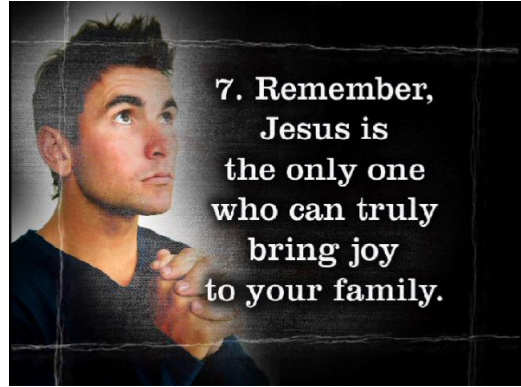
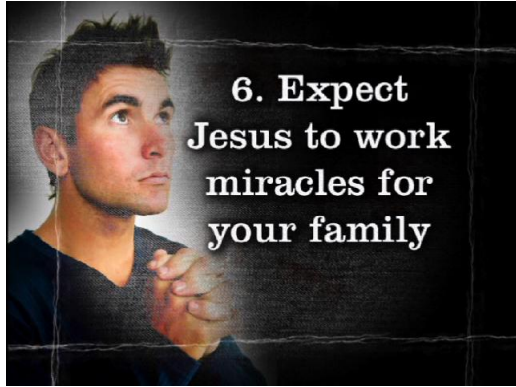


4. Believe  
what  
Jesus  
tells you.



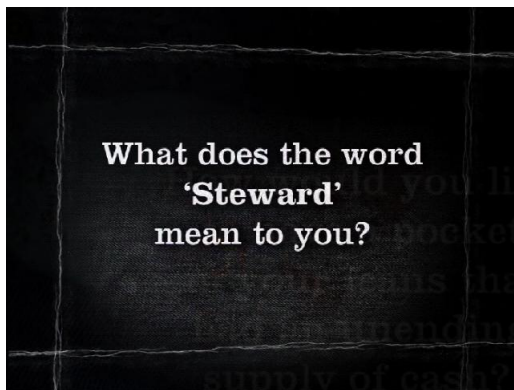
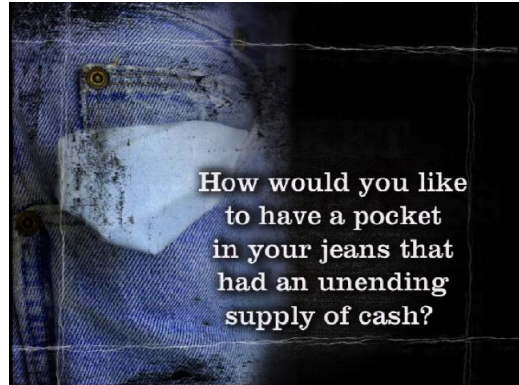
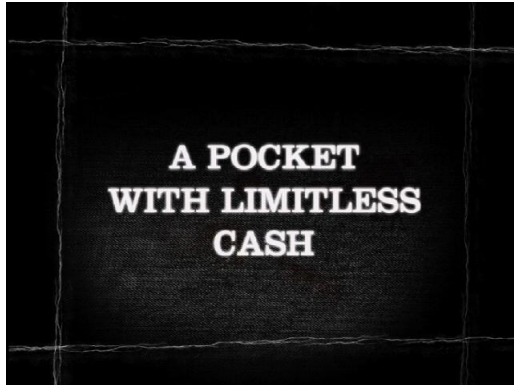
5. Always expect  
the best from Jesus.

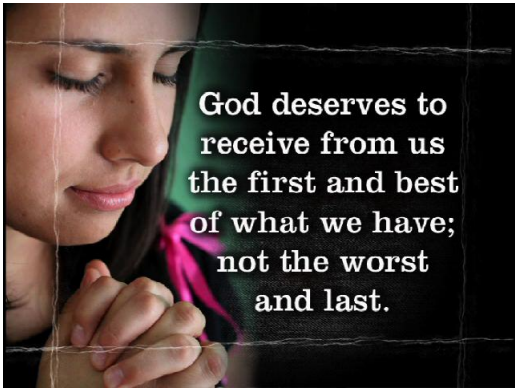
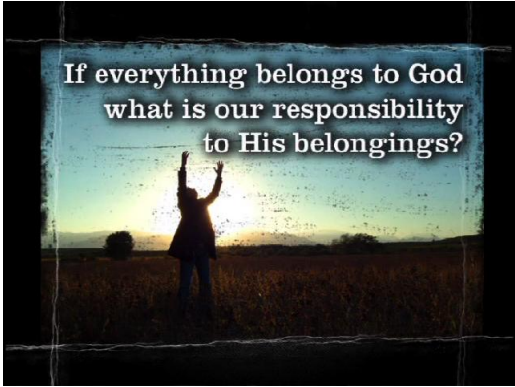
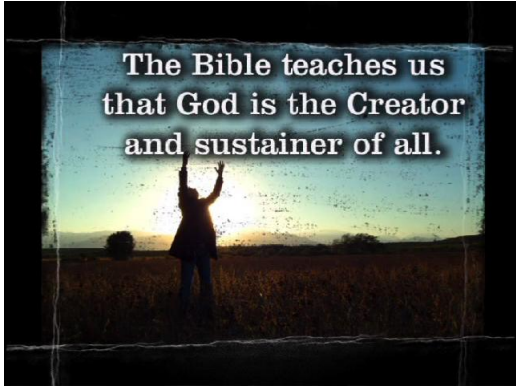


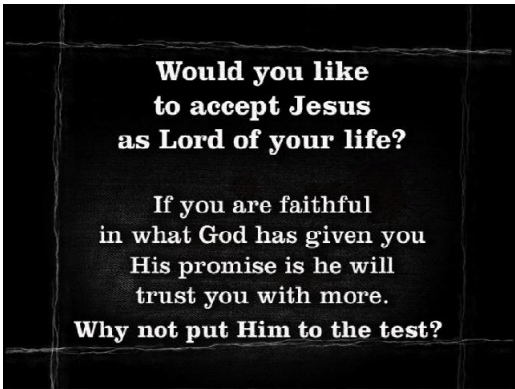




DVD LESSON 13—A POCKET WITH LIMITLESS CASH (Stewardship).

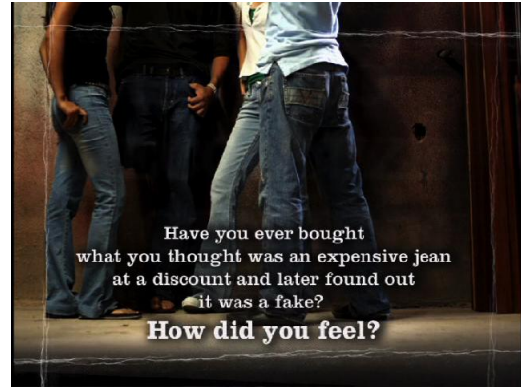




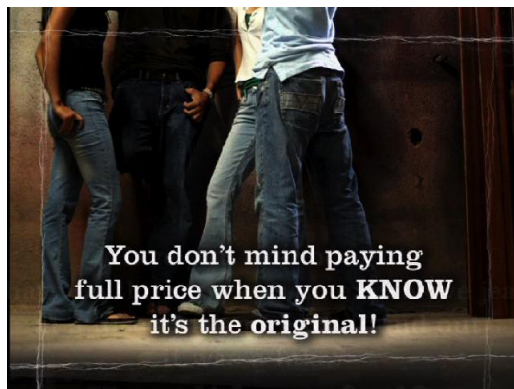


DVD LESSON 14—RECOGNIZING A GENUINE JEAN (Spirit of Prophecy).

**HOW TO  
RECOGNIZE  
A GENUINE  
JEAN**

A photograph showing the lower legs and feet of three people standing on a wooden floor, wearing different styles of blue jeans. The person on the left is wearing a dark blue, straight-leg jean. The person in the middle is wearing a dark blue, straight-leg jean. The person on the right is wearing a light blue, straight-leg jean.

Have you ever bought  
what you thought was an expensive jean  
at a discount and later found out  
it was a fake?  
**How did you feel?**

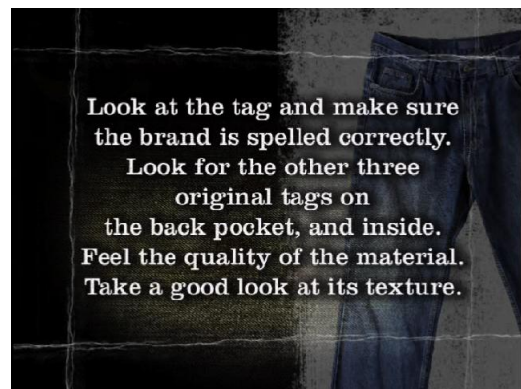
A photograph showing the lower legs and feet of three people standing on a wooden floor, wearing different styles of blue jeans. The person on the left is wearing a dark blue, straight-leg jean. The person in the middle is wearing a dark blue, straight-leg jean. The person on the right is wearing a light blue, straight-leg jean.

You don't mind paying  
full price when you **KNOW**  
it's the **original!**

How can you avoid  
fraud in the future?  
**What distinguishes  
the original  
from the fake?**

A photograph of a dark blue denim jacket hanging on a wooden hanger against a dark, textured background.

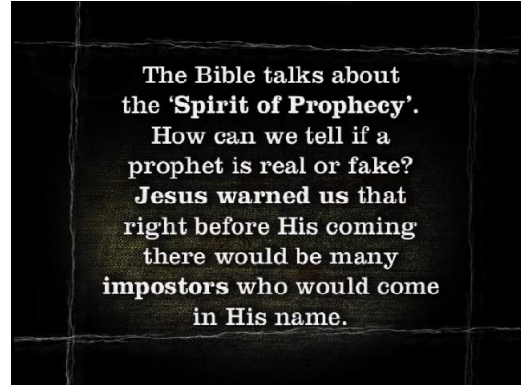
**There are ways  
for you to tell  
the original  
from the fake.**

A photograph of a pair of dark blue denim jeans hanging on a wooden hanger against a dark, textured background.

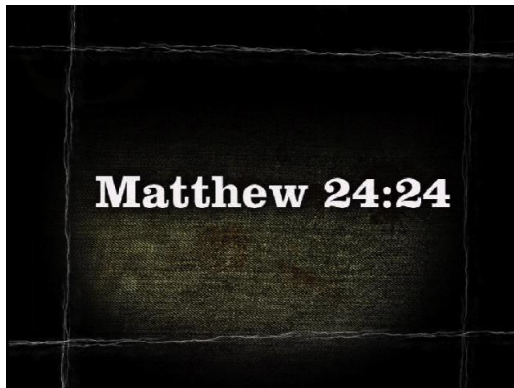
Look at the tag and make sure  
the brand is spelled correctly.  
Look for the other three  
original tags on  
the back pocket, and inside.  
Feel the quality of the material.  
Take a good look at its texture.



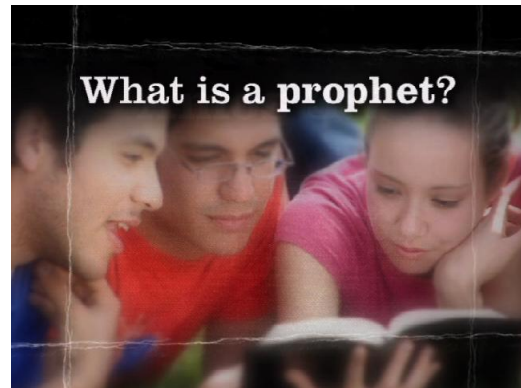
If you still  
can't tell  
the difference,  
take it to  
an expert!



The Bible talks about  
the 'Spirit of Prophecy'.  
How can we tell if a  
prophet is real or fake?  
Jesus warned us that  
right before His coming  
there would be many  
impostors who would come  
in His name.



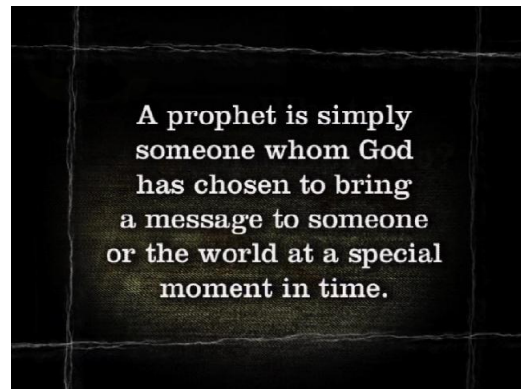
**Matthew 24:24**



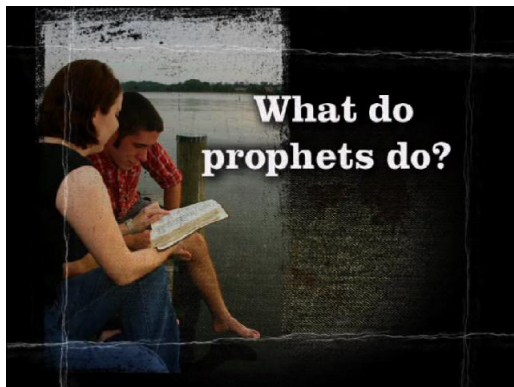
**What is a prophet?**



**Amos 3:7**



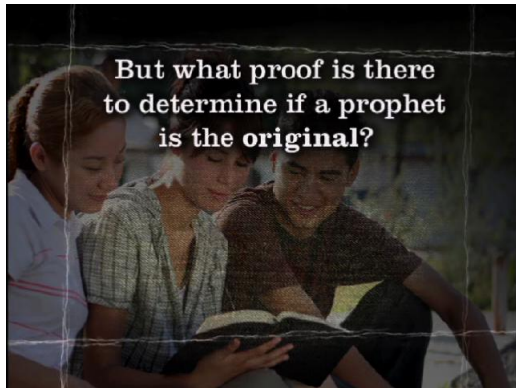
A prophet is simply  
someone whom God  
has chosen to bring  
a message to someone  
or the world at a special  
moment in time.



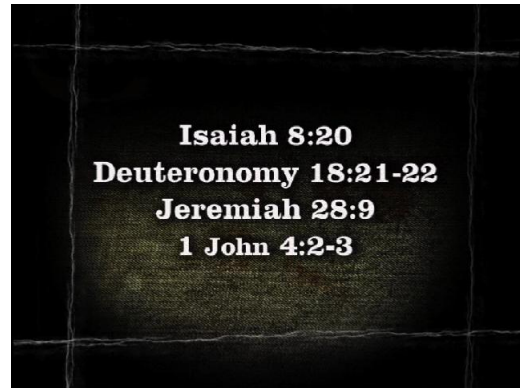
**What do  
prophets do?**



**Ephesians 2:19-21  
Ephesians 4:11-14  
1 Corinthians 14:3-4  
Acts 11:27-30  
Acts 15:32**



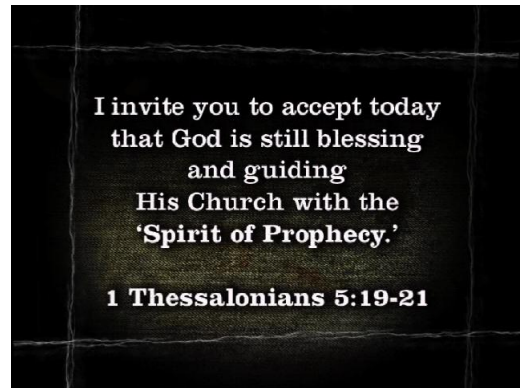
But what proof is there  
to determine if a prophet  
is the original?



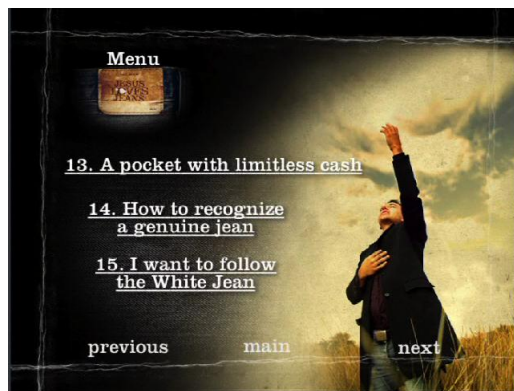
**Isaiah 8:20**  
**Deuteronomy 18:21-22**  
**Jeremiah 28:9**  
**1 John 4:2-3**



The Seventh-Adventist Church  
recognizes **Ellen G. White**  
as a prophet.  
But was she truly  
an original?  
**Let's apply  
the tests.**



I invite you to accept today  
that God is still blessing  
and guiding  
His Church with the  
'Spirit of Prophecy.'  
**1 Thessalonians 5:19-21**



Menu



[13. A pocket with limitless cash](#)

[14. How to recognize  
a genuine jean](#)

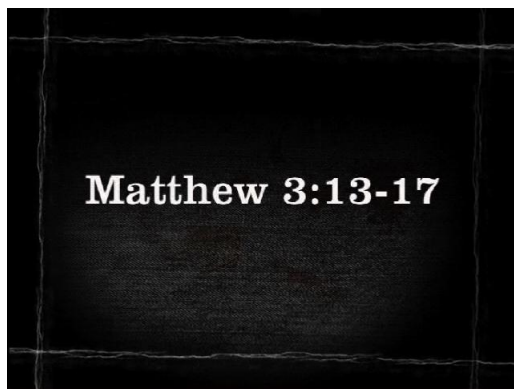
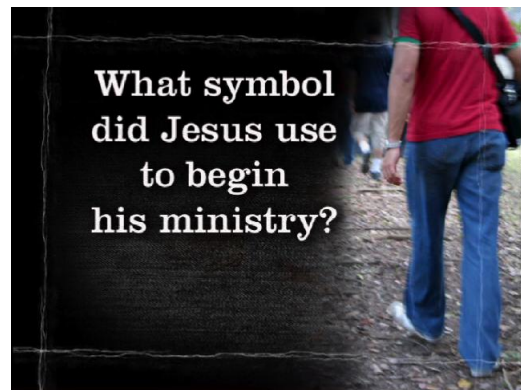
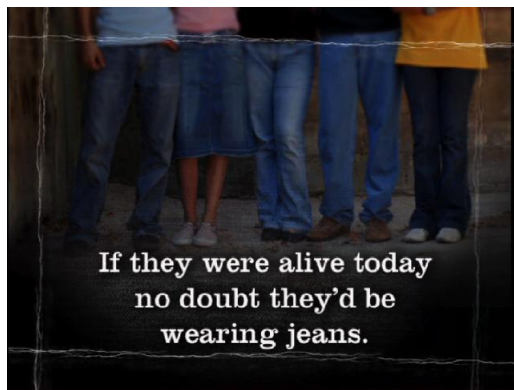
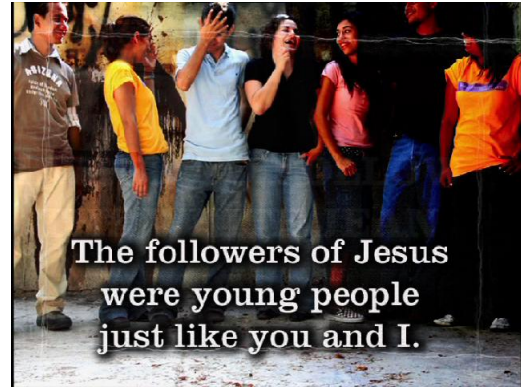
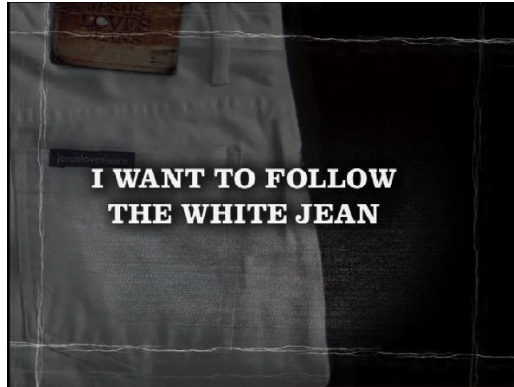
[15. I want to follow  
the White Jean](#)

[previous](#)

[main](#)

[next](#)

DVD LESSON 15—FOLLOWING THE WHITE JEAN (Discipleship).



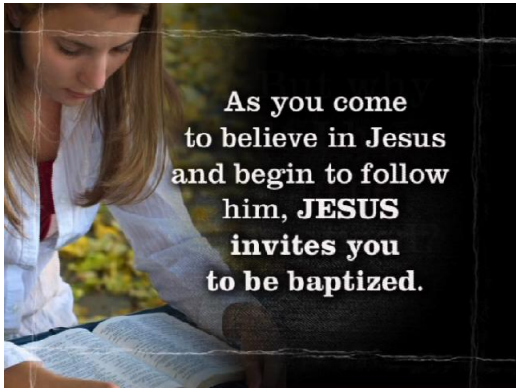
Jesus is our perfect example in all things.

Matthew 28:18-20  
What symbol did Jesus use to initiate a new disciple?

Matthew 28:18-20

A photograph of two men standing outdoors. The man on the left is wearing a red and white checkered shirt, and the man on the right is wearing a dark jacket over a white shirt. They are both looking down at a book or document that the man in the jacket is holding.

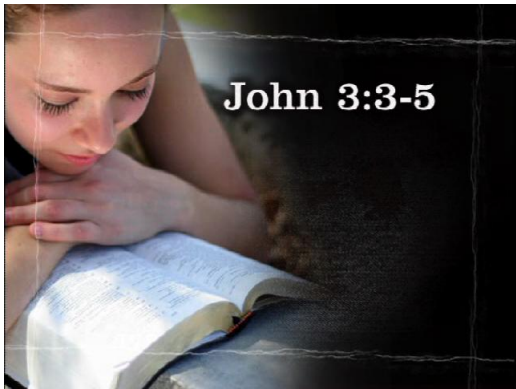
As you come to believe in Jesus and begin to follow him, **JESUS** invites you to be baptized.

A photograph of a young woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white shirt, looking down at an open book she is holding. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

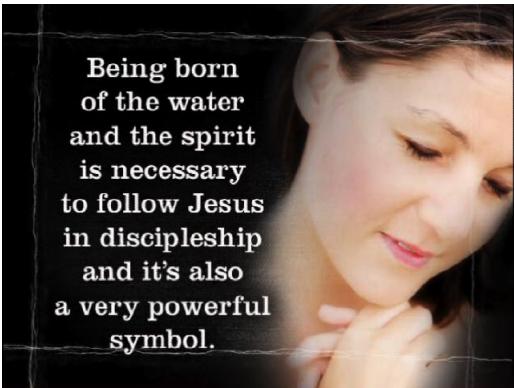
But why do I have to be baptized?

A photograph of a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark, sleeveless dress, standing in front of a light-colored, textured background that looks like a wall or a screen.

John 3:3-5

A photograph of a young woman with long brown hair, wearing a dark top, looking down at an open book she is holding. Her hands are resting on the pages of the book.

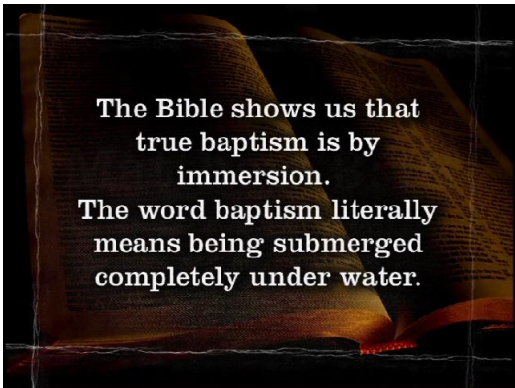
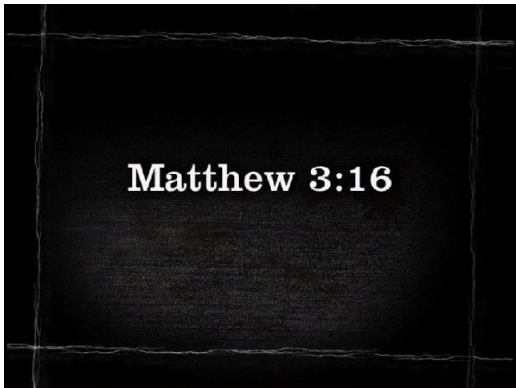
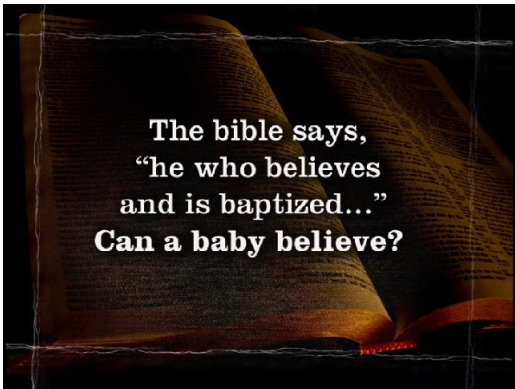
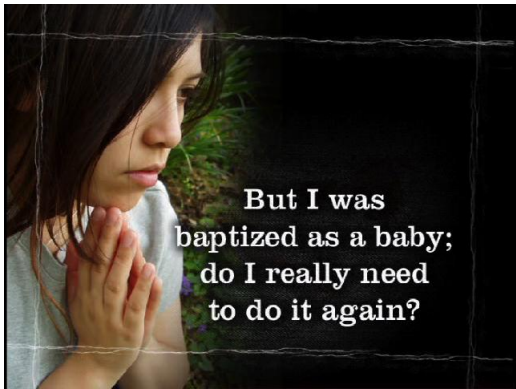
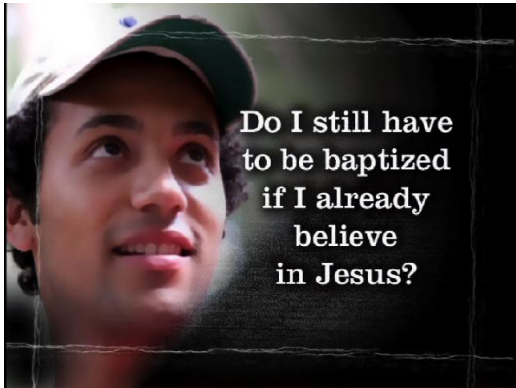
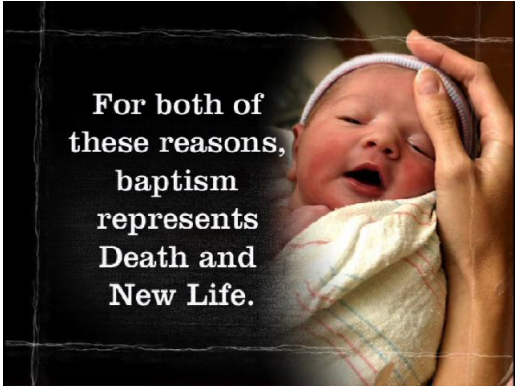
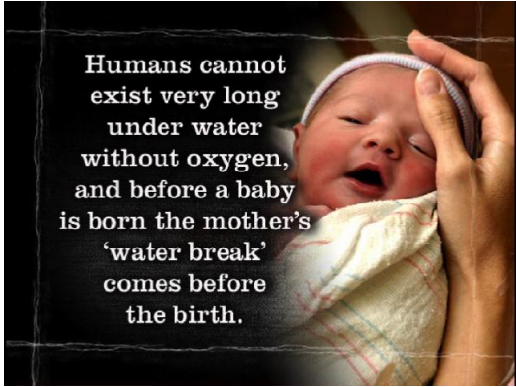
Being born of the water and the spirit is necessary to follow Jesus in discipleship and it's also a very powerful symbol.

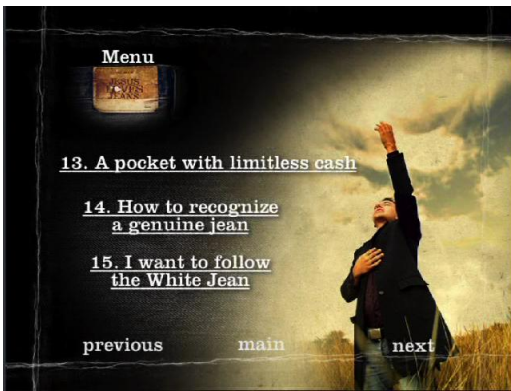
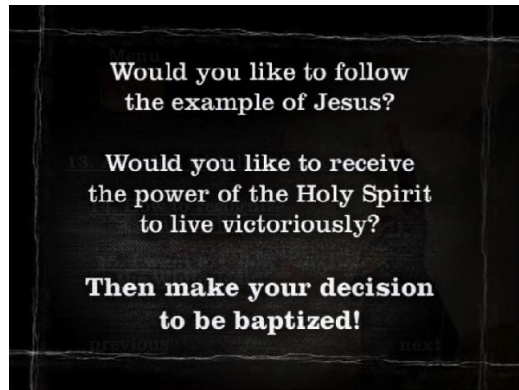
A close-up photograph of a young woman's face in profile, looking down and to the right. She has dark hair and is wearing a light-colored top.

Romans 6:3-5

A photograph of a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark top, looking up at a man who is leaning over her. The man is wearing a red jacket and is pointing at a book or document. They appear to be in a classroom or study setting.







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